IE JEWISH WOMEN'S MAGAZINE

Lilith

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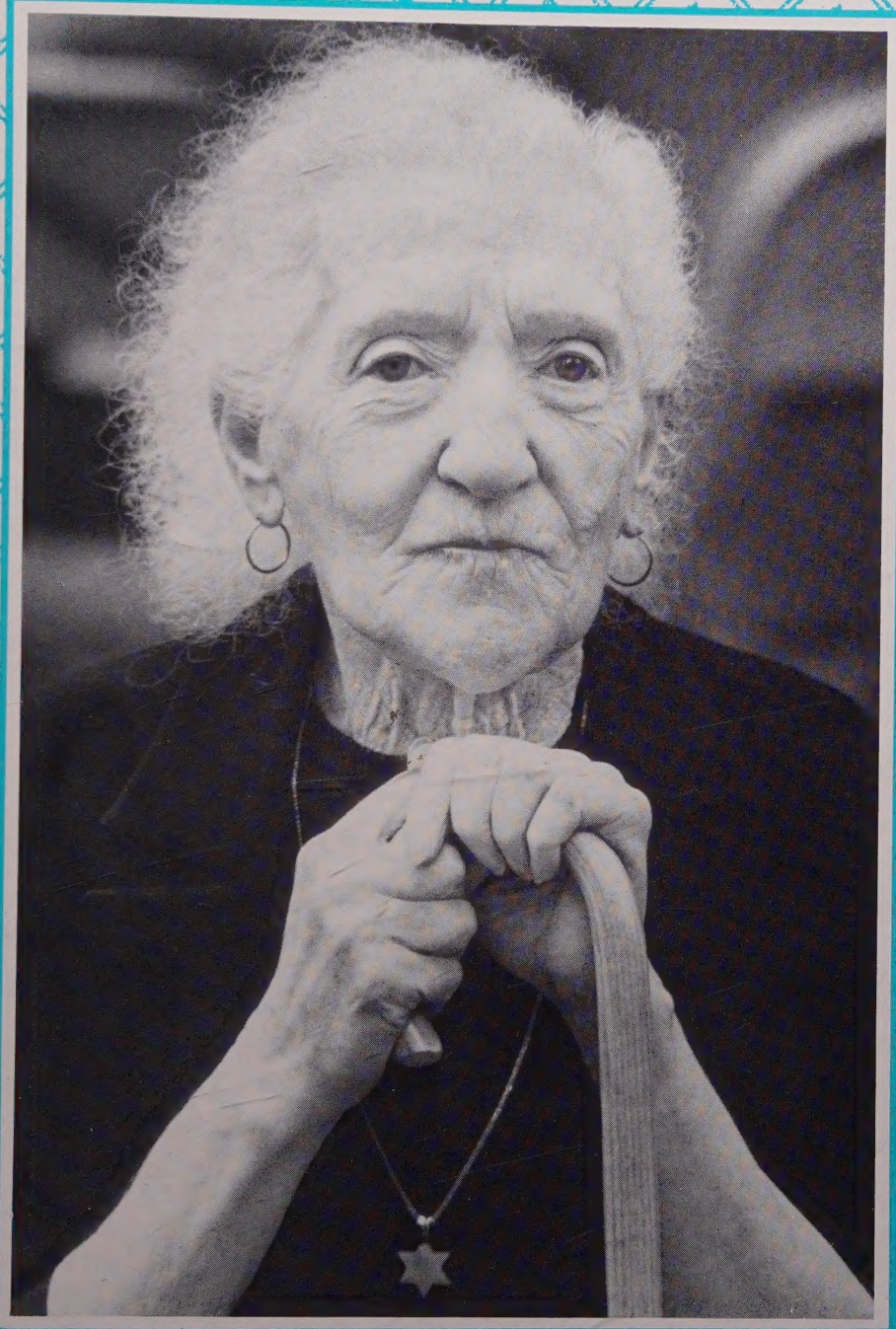


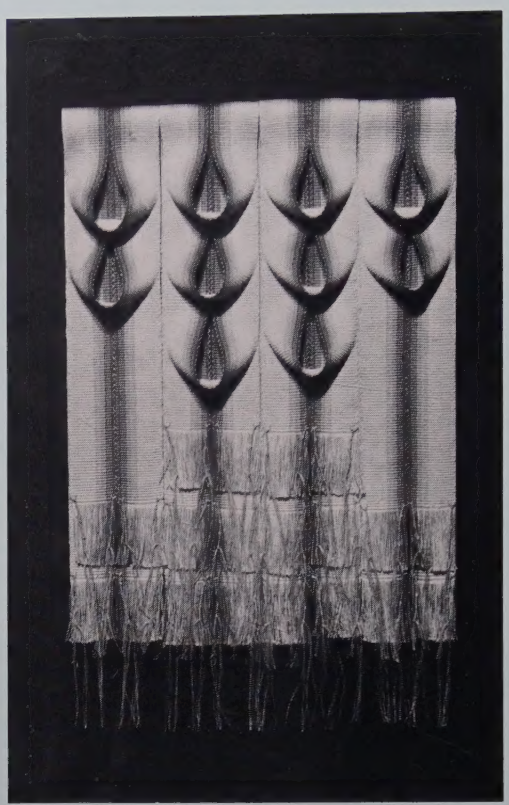
Our Aging Mothers

Expelling Sexism from the Classroom

Jewish Lesbians Finally Speak Out

The Women's Gallery

Bill Aron



Bill Aron

Above: "Open thy mouth and I will fill it." Psalm 81:11

Left: "Be thou unto me a sheltering rock; Whereunto I may continually resort." Psalm 71:3

LAURIE GROSS

"A large tallit *(prayer shawl) creates a home, a womb." California artist Laurie Gross weaves* tallitot *(Hebrew plural of* tallit; talleism *in Yiddish) as artwork. She finds the* tallit *exciting to work with precisely because as a garment it is more closely connected to human beings than a wall hanging or a more ornamental art-piece is. She works on the assumption that the* tallit *is used by women and men.*

Gross feels Judaism and the traditions involved with its ceremonial art have added many layers of meaning to her work. As she works with a concept, the tallit *for instance, she studies traditional sources and finds images in the Torah and in prayer.*

Gross's work has been exhibited at the University of Judaism and the Jewish Federation Building in Los Angeles, the Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum in Berkeley, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations and Yeshiva University in New York. In October 1982, a Gross show will open at the American Jewish History Museum in Philadelphia.

—Marilyn Feit

Number 10

Lilith

Winter '82-'83/5743

THE PREPARED TABLE*

6
Our Golden Years—You Should Live So Long!
by Paula Gantz

The options for a decent old age shrink with every added year of a woman's age. And every year intensifies the dilemma for the daughters of elderly women, who are still seen by the community as the prime care-givers.

10
LILITH interviews Evelyn Torton Beck
by Aviva Cantor

The editor of *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology* talks about the Jewish lesbian movement, anti-Semitism, conflicts with the Jewish community. An added bonus: excerpts from her introduction to the book.

15
Surviving Siberia: Ida Nudel Beats the Odds
by Glenn Richter and Reena Sigman Friedman

The saga of Nudel's four years in icy exile. The regime's attitude toward the "Guardian Angel of the Refuseniks" has not thawed sufficiently to grant her a visa out of the Soviet Union.

18
Battling Sexism in Jewish Schools
by Susan Weidman Schneider

How to create gender justice in Jewish education—in classrooms, texts and play activities. Notes from the front lines of the struggle, plus resources to help *you* change the schools.

24
Journey
A Short Story by Shelley Anne Richtmyer

Her young son's trip to Israel leads a divorced mother to examine her failed marriage to a non-Jew.

27
Reviews
The Traveling Jewish Film Festival
by Barbara Quart

Studying the Public and Private Selves of American Jewish Women
by Deborah Dash Moore

Cover photo by Kathleen Eckles

3 **Lines of Communication**
LILITH's readers write

4 **Kol Ishah**
Progress on the *get* (Jewish divorce bill) issue and other news concerning Jewish women

23 **Tsena-Rena**
Resources for Jewish women

32 **Bima**
Judaism as a Matriarchy
by Jane Litman

LILITH welcomes articles, fiction, poetry, biography, drama, children's stories, criticism, photos and original art work. Please include one-sentence biographical identification, address and phone number. Manuscripts must be typed, double spaced, on one side of the page. Complete guidelines are available on request; enclose SASE. For acknowledgement of receipt, please enclose a stamped self-addressed postcard. For return of manuscripts, enclose an SASE LILITH Publications, Inc., 250 West 57 St., New York, NY 10019.

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*THE PREPARED TABLE *(the Shulchan Aruch)* is the authoritative code of Jewish behavior according to *halacha* (law). As Jewish feminists continue to rediscover and rework Jewish practice, the Contents of *LILITH* may serve as an evolving Prepared Table for a new code of behavior.

LILITH is named for the legendary predecessor of Eve who insisted on equality with Adam. After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, He created a woman, also from the earth, and called her "Lilith." Adam said, "You are fit to be below me and I above you." Lilith said, "We are equal because we both come from the earth." (FROM *THE ALPHABET OF BEN SIRA, 23A-B)*

From the Editors

One of the unexpected consequences of the story on elderly Jewish women (page 6) was the emotional resonance it had for LILITH's staff. We range in age from mid-twenties to mid-forties, and each of us has had different experiences with aging relatives. Yet none of us was comfortable discussing the topic, and we all reported very vivid afterthoughts or dreams about our own old age in the wake of the anxieties Paula Gantz's article aroused: Who will care for *us*? Will we become shopping-bag ladies? Sociologist Pauline Bart has suggested that one reason Jewish parents don't want to live with their adult children is that they fear putting that relationship to a test it might not pass.

Our own feelings are, we know, shared by many women who push off into some vague future any thoughts of growing older. And for those of us who see our mothers aging, and who must deal for the first time with our roles as adult daughters, the conflicts are painful indeed. One woman said, "I went home and for the first time my husband and I talked about what to do as our parents age. The article stirred up fears in me that I had never been willing to address before."

Many LILITH readers tell us how much they liked a particular article, followed by the words "and I Xeroxed copies." While it is heartwarming to learn that LILITH articles receive wide circulation, we must point out two things about this copying: it is both illegal and unethical.

Illegal: LILITH articles are copyrighted. Photocopying LILITH is a violation of the copyright laws.

Unethical: Friends and colleagues who receive articles—or entire sections, such as the Egalitarian Hagada—are spared the necessity of buying the magazine. Therefore, LILITH loses $3. for each copy you send to somebody, no matter how deserving the recipient. At a time when every dollar counts to sustain the magazine, photocopying its contents constitutes sabotage. Please don't do it.

To make virtue sweeter, we have created a special bargain rate for those readers who want 10 or more copies of the Egalitarian Hagada (in issue #9). That issue—with the complete Passover hagada as a special pull-out section—is available at one-third off the regular price. For 10 or more copies, send $2 per copy (plus $3 delivery charge) to Hagada, LILITH, 250 W. 57 St., NYC 10019.

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The staff of LILITH MAGAZINE extends a warm Mazel Tov to News Editor Reena Sigman Friedman and her husband Aryeh—and their parents and siblings—on the birth of their daughter, Ilana Ruth. May she grow up to a life of learning, love and friendship and good deeds in a world at peace.

Lines of Communication

Remembering the Seder

Dear Lilith:

For many years we have searched for a Hagada that would be meaningful to all who gather around our Seder table (25 people this year). You have now provided us with just what we were looking for—"An Egalitarian Hagada." Keep publishing your wonderful, high quality articles.

Charlotte and Alexander Holstein
Syracuse NY

Dear Lilith:

Our second seder in recent years, at best has been a warmed-over version with a marked fall-off in attention—especially among the younger generation, but, also parents' rebelling against a rigid ritual.

This year we used the Egalitarian Hagada for our second seder. *Kol hakovad* to Aviva Cantor. She helped us all breathe new life into a most significant tradition.

It meant as much to my husband as to our daughter. Perhaps, most of all, this new light meant most to me. Thank you all for the inspiration, the scholarship to give it weight, and the forum to share it.

Joyce Arnoff Cohen
New York NY

Vitke Kempner Lives!

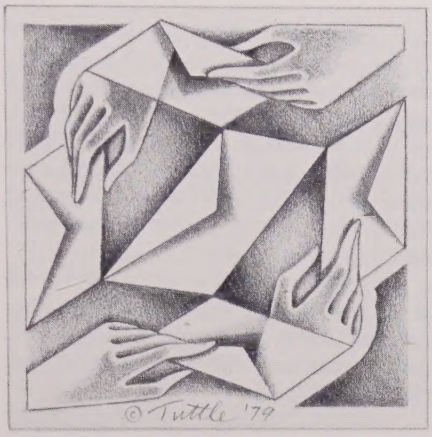
Dear Editors:

A group of us used [the Egalitarian] Hagada this Passover and were very moved by the integration of passages from Inquisition and Holocaust literature. However, the introduction to Hirsh Glick's poem in honor of Vitke Kempner, heroine of Vilna's armed Jewish resistance, left the impression that Vitke did not survive the war. Vitke is alive and well in Israel where she lives on the kibbutz Ein HaChoresh with her husband Abba Kovner, the poet who led Vilna's fighting Jewish partisans from the ghetto to the forest. A photograph of Vitke, Abba and other partisans, male and female, shouldering their rifles is one of the few joyous sights in the Yad Vashem memorial.

Susan Brownmiller
New York NY

Dear Lilith:

The Hagada is excellent. But I wish to point out a factual error: Vitke Kempner did not perish in the resistance. She survived and settled on a kibbutz in Israel with her husband, Abba Kovner, the well-known poet, who was a resistance leader



in the Vilna Ghetto. I spoke with both of them in the summer of 1960.

Yuri Suhl
New York NY

Dear Editors:

I was surprised to read in "An Egalitarian Hagada" that Hirsh Glick and Vitke Kempner had died in the Vilna Ghetto Uprising. Hirsh Glick, the troubadour of the Vilna Ghetto, died in the forest of Estonia. An active member of the Vilna underground, Glick also wrote the words for the "Partisan Hymn." This song was sung to new members of the Vilna underground and later taken to other ghettos. Today, it symbolizes the struggles of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust.

Although Vitke Kempner risked her life daily as an active member of the Vilna ghetto underground and later as a partisan in the Vilna region, she survived World War II....Her story as well as those of the other courageous members of the Vilna resistance will be the subject of a documentary film that I am producing. Josh Waletzky, the director of "Image Before My Eyes," will be directing.

After reading these errors in the Hagada, I realized how important it is to document on film the accounts of the Vilna resistance so Jews today can learn about the actual events and insights from the survivors themselves. The struggles that the Jewish women had to face—outsmarting the Nazis and proving themselves as fighters among their fellow partisans—is especially important for us to hear about. These struggles are part of the history of Jewish women.

Aviva Kempner
New York NY and Washington DC

Cantor replies:

We were dismayed to learn of the error—but glad to hear that Kempner is, indeed, alive. The source of the error was a *New York Times* news story dated October 28, 1973 about the publication of a booklet on the fighters. The news story (but not the booklet) states explicitly that Vitke Kempner "was killed while serving with the partisan forces." We agree with Aviva Kempner that the experiences of women in the Holocaust and Resistance are an important part of Jewish women's history. We are planning a special issue on this subject for 1983.

Reclaiming Jewish Identity

Dear Lilith,

I am an 18 year old woman from a non-religious family. I went to a *shule* which was concerned with passing on the cultural, rather than religious traditions of Judaism. I learned Yiddish instead of Hebrew. This experience left me with an affection for *Yiddishkeit*, but a feeling of alienation from mainstream Jewish life, and from my parents, who find my interest in other aspects of Jewish life rather surprising.

Although I have gone to Chanukah and Purim parties and have had awkward seders at home, my immediate experience with the non-secular aspect of Judaism is minimal. While I do not feel it is necessary to be devout to be Jewish, one should at least be familiar with the laws and rituals which one is not observing.

The generation with no memory of Yiddish, no knowledge of Hebrew, and no personal experience with religious ceremonies, is only marginally Jewish. The absence of Christianity is not, and should not become, the substance of Judaism.

Since women have traditionally been the ones to transmit Judaism to succeeding generations, it is particularly crucial that we do not feel alienated from the religious side of Judaism. Nonetheless, as a feminist, I find it especially difficult to approach traditional ceremonies and literature.

For these reasons I was thrilled to hear of *Lilith*. It is desperately needed.

Erica Simmons
Toronto, Ont.

LILITH welcomes letters to the editor from readers, both to share views on articles printed and to share experiences and information. Letters must include name and address but either or both of these can be omitted.

Kol Ishah

Kol Ishah—"Woman's Voice." Traditionally, the voice of the Jewish woman was not to be heard in public, lest it arouse men. No more. These pages are for news about Jewish women, usually in their own strong voices.

Progress on the Get Problem

Over one-third of all Jewish marriages today end in divorce, but no more than ten percent of all divorces of Jewish couples are marked by the issuance of a *get*, a bill of divorce written by a scribe, given by the husband or his authorized agent to the wife or her authorized agent in the presence of a rabbinical court, or *bet din*.

This estimate comes from Rabbi Melech Shachter, head of an Orthodox *bet din* in Brooklyn who has been involved with *gittin* (plural of *get*) for over 30 years. He and other professionals and laypeople dealing with the granting of *gittin* cite two major reasons for this situation: ignorance and the refusal of one spouse to go along with a get.

Rabbi Shachter estimates the incidence of non-compliance to be as high as 30 to 40 percent of all *get* cases.

According to *halacha* (Jewish law), both spouses must agree to the *get* of their own free will for it to be considered valid, but only the husband can legally give the *get*. The wife can either accept or refuse it. ("Jewish Divorce Law" by Blu Greenberg, LILITH #3.)

In many divorce cases, either spouse, but more often the husband, will not agree to a *get*, usually out of vindictiveness and occasionally to get a payoff for finally complying, says Gloria Greenman, president of G.E.T. —Getting Equitable Treatment. G.E.T. was founded to inform the Jewish public about the *get* issue and to help men and women obtain *gittin* when a recalcitrant spouse refuses to cooperate with the procedure. "Sometimes you find a person who didn't even know what a *get* was," she noted, "and this is something you can hold over the other person's head, and they use it as a tool."

Without evidence of a *get* having been granted and accepted, neither Orthodox nor Conservative rabbis will perform second-marriage ceremonies for either spouse.

Within Orthodoxy *halachic* research is being conducted to alleviate problems associated with Jewish divorce law. At a recent Family Law Institute sponsored by Yeshiva University, Rabbi J. David Bleich, Professor of Jewish Law and Ethics at Cardozo Law School, and Judah Dick, a lawyer and ordained Orthodox rabbi, each proposed similar pre-marital agreements that would attempt to solve future *get* problems.

Both rabbis call for a standard pre-nuptual agreement financially penalizing a husband who refused to give a *get*. Rabbi Bleich suggested an agreement providing for "an enhanced level of maintenance to exist for the entire time there is a valid marriage as defined by Jewish law." Rabbi Dick calls for "an agreement by which, if someone refused to give a divorce, he would have to pay damages."

Both rabbis felt that such financial agreements would be enforceable by both Jewish and civil courts. But they could not be applied retroactively to pre-existing marriages, and so, commented Rabbi Bleich, "this is a problem which, under the best of all possible scenarios, is going to be with us for quite a long time."

The Conservative movement has made several attempts in the past 25 years to "work around" Jewish divorce law, in the words of Rabbi Edward Gershfield, Associate Professor in Talmud at the Jewish Theological Seminary and an expert on Conservative *get*.

In 1954, the Conservative rabbinate added an amendment to the *ketubah* (the Jewish marriage contract) stating, in essence, that, at the time of marriage, husband and wife agreed that in the event of a civil divorce, either would come before a *bet din* of the Seminary or the Rabbinical Assembly at the other's request. The *bet din* would then order a reluctant spouse to complete the *get* process. If the husband or wife did not cooperate, the *bet din* would level a fine. If the fine was not paid, the wronged party would sue in civil court. "It was hoped that a civil court would uphold the amendment," said Rabbi Gershfield. But many rabbis, reluctant to challenge the status quo, did not use the amended *ketubah*. In addition, says Rabbi Gershfield, no case of this nature was ever brought before a civil court.

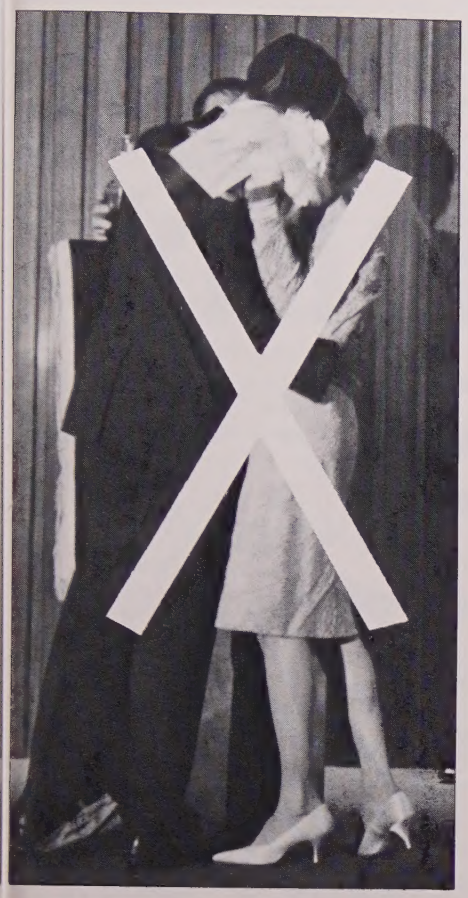
In 1968, the Law Committee of the Rabbinical Assembly and the JTS recommended to the Rabbinic Assembly convention a new proposal to avoid the taking of legal action in *get* cases. An agreement, separate from the *ketubah*, would be signed by both spouses before the wedding declaring that "if our marriage should end in civil divorce, and one of us refuses to cooperate with a *get*, the marriage is annulled by our own wishes." This proposal, too, had no far-reaching effects.

In 1969, the RA-JTS Law Committee decided to authorize a *bet din* to nullify marriages when a spouse refused to cooperate with a *get*. Rabbi Gershfield was appointed head of the *bet din*, which has taken action "several times a year." He stressed that the *bet din* is a last resort, used only in urgent cases where a wife is ready to remarry. A request to convene the special *bet din* must come from the rabbi who has been asked to perform a woman's second marriage. "We are not anxious to use this sort of *bet din* if it is at all possible that the *get* can still be obtained," Rabbi Gershfield stated. "Although it has Talmudic precedent, we want to preserve the *get* procedure."

In contrast with many other professionals dealing with *get*, Rabbi Gershfield insists that refusal to cooperate with a *get* is not a growing problem. "There are far fewer cases than the Jewish media would have us believe," he said, estimating that a *get* is contested in only ten to 15 percent of all instances. Often, he continued, a woman reports that her husband refuses to give a *get* because "after a divorce fight, she thinks he's not going to cooperate, and doesn't want to ask him." The rabbi advises that the initial contact should be made through a rabbi, and that "a letter from a rabbi most often solves the problem." However, he added, "when somebody's really dead set against it, there's nothing you can do."

Gloria Greenman of G.E.T. stressed the problem's urgency. "There is no doubt that the rabbis are obligated to address this problem," she declared. "What other issue has such terrible ramifications? As the problem becomes more acute, the need for a solution is more pressing."

Bracha Osofsky works in Public Relations in the Jewish community. She has completed an M.A. degree in Journalism at New York University.



Brooklyn-based G.E.T. was formed almost three years ago at a neighborhood get-together. "We were commiserating with one another about a personal friend whose daughter was unable to obtain a *get*," Greenman recalled. "Suddenly I said, "let's stop talking and do something about it."

G.E.T. is the only group of its kind in the United States. It is dedicated to inducing both parties in a broken marriage to appear before a *bet din* and go through with the *get* process. Backed by legal and *halachic* advisors, G.E.T. explores various means of pressuring a recalcitrant individual, including social ostracism and denial of *kibbudim* (synagogue honors).

G.E.T. handles cases from the entire spectrum of Jewish observance but refers clients to Orthodox law courts, as their rulings are acceptable to all branches of Judaism.

Of the more than 125 cases the organization has taken on to date, almost 25 percent have been resolved—situations that would not have been settled had it not been for G.E.T., said Greenman. The successes range from cases where the civil divorce took place this year, to others that had dragged on for ten or 15 years. In some instances, G.E.T.'s very existence may have served as a deterrent to spouses who might otherwise have refused to go along with the *get* process.

G.E.T. operates mainly on membership dues, donations and volunteer power. It maintains a casework committee of volunteer social workers, psychologists, counselors, lawyers, rabbis and lay persons. Cases are referred by rabbis, friends, relatives, word of mouth and the media. The casework committee meets regularly, and confidentiality is strictly maintained.

"We make it very clear that we are not representing either party and we are not taking sides," said Greenman. "We say we are concerned that if you had a Jewish marriage, you should have a Jewish divorce."

Although roughly three-quarters of G.E.T.'s cases involve women whose husbands refuse to cooperate, the organization's lecturers emphasize that *get* is not a "women's issue" but a religious one. "We handle the cases of men *and* women," Greenman stressed.

It must be recognized that, unlike Israeli religious courts, which govern marriage and divorce and can enforce their rulings through fines and incarceration, the *bet din* in North America has no legal power to compel an individual to cooperate with the *get* procedure. In certain cases, said Rabbi Bleich, "a *bet din* may use whatever police power is available in order to secure compliance with their decree."

G.E.T. groups are being formed now in Canada, Los Angeles and New Jersey. The New York group can be reached at P.O.B. 131, 1012 Avenue I, Brooklyn, New York, 11230. (212) 951-6574. All requests for assistance must be received in writing.

One form of "police power" endorsed by many Orthodox rabbis and lawyers consists of taking *get* cases into American civil courts, in the hope that they will instruct the husband to appear before a *bet din* and comply with its ruling. Said Richard Kurtz, a Manhattan attorney who has probably been involved in more *get* court cases than any other lawyer in the United States, "If you've gotten the husband before a *bet din*, you've gotten the *get*. All the fight is out of him."

In 1979, Kurtz represented the wife in *Stern v. Stern*, a precedent-setting case in which a New York State Supreme Court judge ruled that a wife who had successfully obtained a civil divorce was entitled to a similar court mandate directing the husband to both grant her a *get* and to appear before a *bet din* convened for that purpose.

The deciding factor in *Stern*, Kurtz explained, "was finding that marriage under Jewish law is a contract, as it is under New York law. And if it's a contract, the contract is enforceable. Under Jewish law, the enforceability of the contract is that where two parties cannot live together, they should divorce." Kurtz continued:

The court's decision ordering the husband to appear before a *bet din* is enforceable by contempt order and punishable by fine or imprisonment as long as he remains in the country. In *Stern*, an appeal was filed on behalf of the husband, but he chose to flee to Mexico rather than appear in court. To the best of Kurtz's knowledge, the *get* has never been granted.

A number of subsequent cases have been decided on the basis of the *Stern* precedent, said Kurtz. In *Waxstein v. Waxstein*, the couple signed a separation agreement stipulating that the husband would give a *get* and the wife would cooperate in the sale of the house. He refused and so did she. The court ruled that he must keep his promise of the *get* if she kept her side of the bargain, a decision that was affirmed by the appellate court.

(Although this was "an ordinary case," Kurtz said, the appellate court decision referred to "peculiar circumstances," leading some to believe that the court was trying to avoid a flood of such cases.)

Kurtz blamed sociological factors for the rise in *get* problems today. He does not deny that "there may be certain inequities in Jewish law regarding the rights of women in the *get* area," but concludes that the major problem is grossly deficient education in the Jewish community.

Kurtz advises anyone seeking to have a *get* upheld in civil court not to make a separation agreement before the *get* issue is resolved. "If the lawyer tells you there's nothing you can do about it, change lawyers," he warned. "Because there's always something that can be done. There are always things the husband wants, such as property or visitation rights, in exchange for which he'll give a *get*." Whatever deal is made, he continued, "make it contingent upon the getting of the *get* and hold back certain things until the *get* is actually given. But after the civil divorce," he said, "forget about it. There's no further relationship between the parties, and you'll never be able to negotiate a *get*."

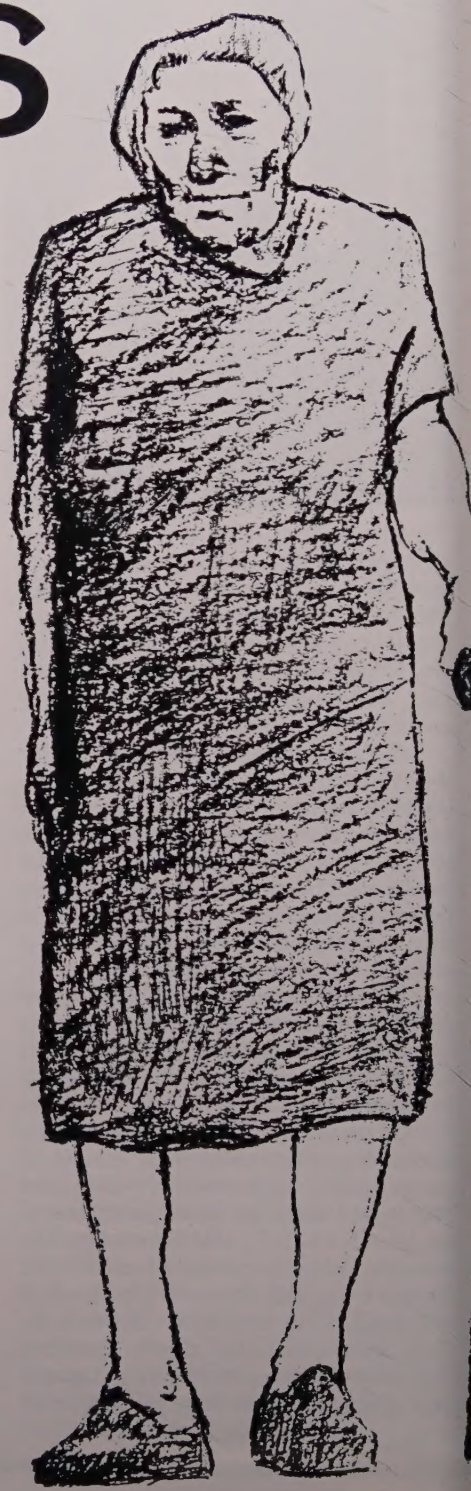
—Bracha Osofsky

(Continued on p. 31)

You Should Live So Long

OUR GOLDEN YEARS

by Paula Gantz



It's one of the first warm, sunny days of the year, and 90-year-old Rosa J. stands huddled over her cane at the deserted street corner. Her 60-year-old daughter Jane attempts to maneuver Rosa down the curb and across the street to the supermarket, but Rosa is afraid of falling. Several passers-by stare at the two women, but none stops to lend a hand.

Finally, Rosa and Jane inch their way across the street and enter the supermarket. Here they purchase most of Rosa's food for the next two weeks, as Jane can only visit her mother biweekly. Rosa J.'s daughter must travel almost two hours to visit her.

Rosa is one of the lucky ones. Her daughter is still alive and within driving distance of the old neighborhood. Other elderly women are not as fortunate. Many lost their families during World War II, others never had children or the children themselves aged and died, and still others have family living in distant communities. Without children to aid them financially or emotionally, they are totally isolated in a society that views youthfulness and money as its most important achievements.

Rosa, unable to walk alone, rarely ventures out of the house except to lean up against the brick facade of her 1920's tenement apartment house.

But even if she were still physically able, Rosa J. has nowhere to go and nothing to do. She belongs to the growing number of "old, old" Jewish women—over 85 years old—who are a relatively new and growing constituency in the community.

Close to a quarter of a million Jews over the age of 65 live within the five boroughs of New York City, according to the Jewish Association for Services for the Aged (**JASA**). This number represents 20 per cent of the Jewish population. The majority are probably women.

New York City is not alone in its aging Jewish population. Officials in the Federation of Jewish Agencies in Philadelphia estimate conservatively that 11 to 14 percent of the 350,000 Jews there are over 65; 33 percent of the 225,000-member Greater Miami Jewish community are reported to be senior citizens. There are similar estimates from other large Jewish urban centers.

There are, however, no figures on how many of these people are the truly elderly—those 85 and up—or on exactly how many are women. Moreover, all these numbers are merely estimates based on census data for the general white population; no detailed survey has been completed, though several are currently underway. The Jewish spokespeople will-

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Paula Gantz is a member of Lilith's Advisory Committee.

ing to venture these estimates show a fear of revealing to non-Jews the shrinking overall size and increasing percentage of the elderly in the Jewish community; they don't want to lose political clout.

Approximately 25 percent of the Jewish elderly in New York City live at or near the poverty level, according to JASA. In Miami, that figure is closer to 40 percent, said Nathan Skolnick, director of planning and budgeting for the Greater Miami Jewish Federation.

Most of these elderly are women, because women tend to live longer than men.

Most of the elderly are poor because of the ravages of inflation on savings and because of the way the Social Security laws are structured.

Once a woman's husband dies, she receives only one-half of his Social Security benefits or her own, if she has accrued any—whichever amount is greater. Her husband's pension, if he had one, is also often reduced. The worst off is the elderly woman who never married and probably worked at a low-paying female-stereotyped job.

As the laws are currently structured, old people must "pauperize" themselves before they can qualify for many government programs and services. They must spend all the personal funds saved throughout their lifetime before they can qualify for Medicaid. The rules place a $1,500 limit for a single person and a $2,250 maximum for a couple on personal savings. (This amount is considered a burial allowance.) As a result, the elderly are reluctant to apply for these programs until they are desperately in need. In a recent interview, Loretta Schwartz-Nobel, author of *Starving in the Shadow of Plenty*, stated:

"One out of every three widows (in Philadelphia) is living in poverty, even with the help of Social Security and other programs. When you are poor, old, physically fragile and isolated, it is practically impossible to get by."

Many elderly Jews live in physically aging urban surroundings such as the Lower East Side and the South and West Bronx in New York, Miami's South Beach and Los Angeles' Fairfax Section, despite the advancement of decay and rampant crime. Lois Lowenstein, a case supervisor for Project Ezra, a group which provides services to the elderly on the Lower East Side, claims that virtually none of the elderly is actually abandoned by their families in these old neighborhoods.

But there are good reasons why many refuse to move. Since most elderly live on fixed incomes, they are hesitant to leave their relatively cheap apartments. They also fear the toll physical change might take on them. Besides, what are the alternatives? Institutionalization and living with their children. Most elderly reject both choices.

Institutionalized people who receive government assistance only recently won the right to retain $40 a month from their Social Security checks as a personal allowance. Prior to this decision, the entire check had to be signed over to the institution in order for them to qualify for Medicaid. As Lowenstein herself admitted, the elderly are generally fiercely independent and do not want to sign over most of their Social Security checks to an institution. While the elderly can apply for Medicaid to cover the high costs—ranging up to $40,000 a year—of senior citizens' homes, application can only be made if the elderly person has already depleted her/his savings and other resources, and not before.

"When you are poor, old, physically fragile and isolated, it is practically impossible to get by."

The second alternative—living with one's children—is not common among Jews. Corinne Azen Krause, in her cross-cultural study *Grandmothers, Mothers and Daughters* found that Jewish grandmothers were much less likely to live with their children than Slavic or Italian grandmothers.

For most of the elderly, who have worked hard to achieve some independence during their lives, there is a real fear of becoming a burden in their old age. In addition, there is the clash of differing lifestyles. Totally assimilated and non-religious children are unlikely to want to live with European-born religious parents, and vice versa. Even when there is some commonality in background, economic constraints often limit the physical space that once would have been allocated to elderly parents.

Nina C., is 90 years old. Russian-born, she has lived all over Europe, and settled on New York's Upper West Side with her husband 40 years ago. Her spacious apartment in an immaculately-kept building is sparsely decorated with old-fashioned, but good-quality furniture.

Walking toward the living room using a cane, Mrs. C. explains that one of her legs was amputated when she was 12 years old. This handicap doesn't seem to have impaired her in her youth. She was trained as a dentist, and worked in that profession until she settled in the United States. The credentials she needed to be licensed here were too difficult to obtain.

Mrs. C. has one daughter, who lives in Queens. This daughter and her husband are retired as well, and spend part of their winters in Florida. Mrs. C. has no desire to live with her daughter. "I love my apartment," she states emphatically. "I can take my bath myself here. At my daughter's, I can't," she explained; her bathroom arrangement allows her to reach the bathtub via the toilet seat. She also would not want to go to Florida with her daughter. "There are too many steps there."

The Krause study found that generations of Slavic and Italian women lived in closer physical proximity than did the Jewish women. Part of the reason for this relates to the upward mobility—geographic and economic—of the younger Jewish generations, symbolized by their moving to the suburbs.

Elderly women have a hard time coping under such circumstances. The isolation they suffer leads to severe loneliness and a feeling of uselessness. Over and over again, elderly women interviewed for this article spoke of their wish for personal contact.

Senior citizen centers and women's organizations do offer some opportunity for elderly women to establish relationships, but not all are interested in such activities. In addition, once a woman reaches her 80's, even if she is relatively well, she is generally physically unable to make the effort required to attend organized functions. Safety and transportation are also factors limiting participation.

Sandra Divack, Director of Project Dorot, a volunteer group in New York which visits and aids elderly and homebound Jews, points out that men have a ready-made community in religious society: the daily *minyan* (quorum of synagogue worshippers). Women have traditionally been more family-oriented, with little time for outside relationships. It's hard for them in their old age to establish a new network of friends to replace the family.

Low female self-esteem can also inhibit sociability. Elderly women were often raised in homes where men were honored over women, a notion that has carried over into old age.

Seventy-two-year old Sarah V. has no children and no relatives on the East Coast. She lives completely alone in a one-bedroom apartment on the Upper

Resources for the Elderly

PUBLICATIONS

The National Council of Jewish Women has a wide variety of publications on interest to those working with the elderly—including how to get a meals-on-wheels program started and a pamphlet, *Options in Living Arrangements for the Elderly.* They also have published two nursing-home guides to help people select appropriate facilities. The volunteers who were trained to conduct the surveys have now become local advocates for nursing home residents to ensure that they are receiving adequate care. For further information on the aging programs at NCJW, which has made this area one of their top priorities, contact:

NCJW
15 East 26 St
New York NY 10010

My People Jacob: Thy Tents Have Grown Old: A Manual for Planning Weekend Kallot (retreats) for Older Adults by Gary P. Zola and Kerry M. Olitzky (this pamphlet has a very useful bibliography on aging) and *So Teach Us to Number Our Days: A Manual on Aging for Synagogue Use*
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Ave.
New York NY 10021

ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations which connect the Jewish elderly with younger people in their communities:

Dorot
Temple Ansche Chesed
West End Ave. at 100th St.
New York NY 10025

Project Ezra
197 East Broadway
New York NY 10002

The Ark
3509 West Lawrence Ave.
Chicago IL 60625

FILMS

For a filmography with numerous listings relevant to the lives of older Jewish women:

"Growing Older" Medium #24
Jewish Media Service
Jewish Welfare Board
15 East 26 St.
New York NY 10010

Kathleen Eckles

West Side of Manhattan.

The last two years have been especially hard. Her husband died of cancer about 20 months ago, and Mrs. V. was unable to cope with this loss. She and her husband were very close—"almost like young lovers"—and they had no friends other than each other. On two occasions, Mrs. V. has had to be hospitalized because of her lack of attention to food or her confusion over drugs and their administration.

She now is able to function on her own. But she has no interest in social contacts. Several neighbors have invited her for meals, but she prefers to be alone in her somewhat run-down apartment. "I'm not in the mood," she says. Mrs. V. also refuses to attend the senior citizens centers.

Most of Mrs. V.'s day is spent watching television and reading the Yiddish newspaper. While she does not express her loneliness in words, she is eager for attention, but self-denigrating at the same time. She says about herself, "I don't like myself, why should anyone else?"

Project Dorot has tried to integrate the young and the old in an effort to show that the elderly do have something to offer society. In certain instances, they have matched up elderly women with young children to provide a foster grandparent experience. "We try to stress that I need your (the older person's) help," Sandy Divack explains.

Project Ezra utilizes high school and college-age volunteers to help the elderly on the Lower East Side. One of its volunteers speaks of her experience: "My relationship with Bessie exposed me to a different perspective on life—what an old person looking back now sees as what really mattered."

The primary provider of care to the elderly is the daughter or daughter-in-law. This holds true whether or not the daughter is working, according to Natalie Gordon, chief of social services at the Jewish Home and Hospital for Aged in Manhattan.

The daughter is often caught in the "middle generation," the group that is called upon to provide care and nurturance to both the generation immediately older and immediately younger than it. This seriously strains the resources of the daughter, who is frequently approaching the age of 65 herself. A middle-aged Boston woman recently reported: "I have not been to any social gathering in the past year or so where the dominant subject for discussion among my contemporaries has not been 'what to do about our parents.'"

Krause points out that Italian and Slavic daughters and granddaughters were more likely to make daily visits to the grandmothers. Among the Jewish women, weekly visits were the norm. As more women enter the work force, there is simply less time available for a daughter to care for her mother.

Mrs. S. has lived in Brooklyn for the past 18 years. Now 88 years old, she immigrated to the United States in 1912, supporting herself in small businesses during most of this time, as her husband died when she was in her late twenties. Once quite active, Mrs. S. can no longer walk very well. When she does, she needs a cane and someone to support her.

Mrs. S.'s daughter comes to visit her as often as possible, but she has her own problems and interests. Recently divorced, she runs her own business and cannot drive the 50 minutes to her mother's at a moment's notice.

The delegation of the burden chiefly to the daughter also creates or increases the conflicts between generations. The intense involvement caused by the older woman's need for care tends to revive unresolved conflicts from the past—arguments between mother and daughter, sometimes dating back 40 to 50 years.

Aging deals a severe blow to the traditional role of the mother as nurturer. The elderly Jewish woman, who once ruled the roost, is now relegated to a posi-

Miriam Weinstein

"As more women enter the work force there is less time for a daughter to care for her mother."

tion of powerlessness, weakness and dependency. Her daughter assumes responsibility for her care, from cooking and cleaning to dealing with the numerous bureaucracies involved with the elderly. The daughter is especially important in this role for the very elderly non-American-born mother, who often relied on her husband to deal with bureaucracies in this country.

"It's very hard for the parents to take," Lowenstein said. "*They* were once the care providers."

The Jewish community provides some services to the elderly, although most of its programs rely on government funding that is currently being cut.

During the last 15 years, the federal government has provided funds, generally through some matching formula, to state, local and private agencies interested in administering programs for the elderly. The Jewish community has availed itself of these funds, and matched them with community-raised monies. In New York City, $6.4 million—approximately 20 percent of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies' annual budget of $32 million—goes to programs for the elderly, according to Al Schwarz, consultant for health care and aging at the Federation. In Miami, said Nathan Skolnick, approximately $10 million in community-raised funds are spent on such programs.

In New York City, much of these funds are administered through JASA, although some of the budget does go directly to five senior citizens' homes. JASA operates over 20 senior citizens' centers throughout the city, several luncheon clubs and two apartment-house complexes. What is difficult to determine is how many people actually avail themselves of these facilities, and how many cannot because the facilities are over-utilized.

Ann Wolfe, a long-time Jewish community activist, claimed that many elderly Jews do not know of the Jewish resources available. The community does not have an extensive outreach program, she said. "An awful lot of elderly Jews in New York fall through the cracks." This is especially true of Jews who have not previously associated with the Jewish community and of the foreign-born who have no one to help them.

The homes that Federation in New York supports are geared to the well elderly, the frail elderly and those in between. There are dozens of other, private and non-Federation-supported Jewish senior citizen homes located in the New York area aimed at people in these categories. These are not supervised or monitored by the Federation or any other overall Jewish communal body.

Fewer than five percent of the Jewish elderly population lives in such facilities. Schwarz claims that there currently are enough beds in Jewish senior citizens' homes for the people who need them. The existence of long waiting lists at many of these homes and of Jewish residents desiring Jewish homes but living in non-Jewish ones seem to indicate the opposite is true.

Some of the newer types of housing situations available to the well elderly are known as enriched housing units. To qualify for these units, residents living in small efficiency apartments must be self-reliant and able to attend the one or two communal meals prepared for them daily. Federation supports two such facilities.

Meanwhile, the complexion of the elderly Jewish community is changing. Once elderly Jews were largely an immigrant population. The generation of Jews now entering its late fifties and early sixties tends to be American-born, better educated, and slightly better off financially than its predecessor. "They are not as interested in arts and crafts," Schwarz said. Rather, they are drawn to subjects with a higher level of intellectual challenge, to classes in law, politics and history. This shift in interests is placing an added burden on the community to change its traditional programs to ones requiring a greater level of planning and staffing.

The Federation in New York is sponsoring a committee on the aging which will "identify the priorities" of the New York Jewish community in regard to the elderly over the next five years. According to Schwarz, some of the areas that need addressing are housing needs, nursing home beds, home care, leisure activities, food and transportation.

No senior citizens are included on the committee. Schwarz's reason for this omission is that the committee is only dealing with demography and financing, not with the actual delivery of services. Nor has the Federation held a citywide open hearing for the aged to hear *their* needs and concerns.

Schwarz and others stressed that the Jewish community at large must begin to recognize the problems of the elderly as "legitimate fund-raising and volunteer" causes. This is especially important as the Reagan Administration seems bent on cutting funding to programs for the elderly.

Wolfe claims that the situation for elderly Jews is improving. She points to the horrors of ten years ago, when communal groups denied that problems of poverty even existed. "Some Federations have really active, concerned programs," she said, citing Chicago as an example. But others need more "humanity," especially in New York, where the red tape is often overwhelming, she said.

Although Wolfe sees quite a bit of progress being made in services to the elderly, she said that more pressure must be applied before the community's priorities are straightened out.

Whether the Jewish community will deal fairly, honestly and effectively with the problem of its "graying" population may depend largely on whether this becomes a major issue for women. Women compose the majority of the elderly population and also take the prime responsibility for their elderly mothers.

Whether we recognize it or not, whether we will it or not, old age is a feminist issue.

Lilith Interview

Evelyn Torton Beck

by Aviva Cantor

Evelyn Torton Beck, whose article on "I.B. Singer's Misogyny" appeared in LILITH #6, teaches an array of women's studies courses and comparative literature at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Her most recent work has been to edit the collection Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology, *just published by Persephone Press, a feminist publishing house in Watertown, Massachusetts.*

In this interview with LILITH's managing editor, Beck examines some of the issues that led her to create the book. Excerpts from her Introduction, appearing on page 13, are reprinted by permission of Persephone Press.

As a companion piece to the Beck excerpts, we are printing a dispatch just received from a Jewish Lesbian activist in Chicago, documenting her recent confrontation over anti-Semitism in a women's group there.

JEB (Joan E. Biren)

LILITH: What do you mean when you say that "the experience of coming out as lesbians was a crucial step toward our coming out as Jews"?

BECK: Once you really accept yourself as a lesbian, you irrevocably remove the illusion that you belong to the patriarchal society at large. Once that illusion falls away you are more open to seeing other ways in which you stand outside society—both inside and outside the feminist community. That tearing away of a veil, that recognition that you are, in fact, really different, also allows you to experience other parts of yourself that are different, that you may have been covering over—because in our culture it is a less radical outsidership to be a Jew, but it is an outsidership. The process of overcoming the homophobia of the society and really accepting yourself fully also leads a lesbian to accept and love other parts of herself that she may have hidden because they are less accepted in the society at large.

If you are in a lesbian feminist community, you have a lot of support for being who you are. Ironically that support helps you to confront ways in which you perhaps don't have the support that you want. That was the process for me. In other words, recognizing that there was not a visible Jewish presence among the lesbians I met in this community, made me want to say 'I am not only a lesbian feminist, I am also Jewish and I want that recognized.'

LILITH: Could you describe the Jewish lesbian movement—did it arise out of acknowledging the experience of being an outsider?

BECK: To the best of my memory it really began from an aspect of lesbian feminism. You see, lesbian feminism is dedicated toward acknowledging and celebrating the diversity of what it means to be woman and to fighting all forms of oppression.

What happened was, there are a great many Jewish women involved in the lesbian feminist movement. Jewish lesbians involved in this movement began to realize that they were very busy working toward making this diversity come to the fore and were not dealing with their *own* difference. The first Jewish lesbian groups were called together at the Michigan Women's Music Festival; somebody just called a session and said, let's get together as Jewish lesbians. At the beginning, Jewish women didn't particularly know what to do with that, they just knew they wanted to get together and affirm that they were not only lesbians but also Jewish.

This occurred at the same time that within the country a rise of anti-Semitism was beginning. Some convergence of the desire to celebrate our own roots and

origins and diversity coalesced with the recognition that there was larger anti-Semitism in this country, and that gave the movement even greater impetus.

These are really grass-roots groups that have formed, not only in large cities where you would expect them—like Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York and Chicago—but in smaller cities like Madison and Ithaca, New York. Many of these groups are struggling with questions of identity. People are studying their own history and diversity.

What I have learned from putting together this anthology is not only the scope but also the diversity of Jewish experience—I was very *Ashkenazi*-bound in my own experience—and to recognize how many Jews of color there are: interracial Jews, *Sephardic* Jews. Jewish lesbians come from backgrounds from assimilated to Orthodox. Women are sharing their knowledge of what it means to be Jewish in terms of Jewish history, Jewish law, Jewish culture, Jewish languages, and also the history of anti-Semitism, which even a great many Jews are ignorant of. Jewish women are studying about Israel because anti-Semitism is taking the form of "Zionism is racism."

Jewish lesbians held seders all the way from Canada to Washington and Madison; they are writing their own *hagadas*, which are specifically both Jewish and lesbian and making connections with other oppressed groups. They are having Hannukah ceremonies. Many of these ceremonies are transformed, but are nonetheless very much both Jewish and lesbian.

LILITH: You write that it is difficult to identify oneself as a Jew outside anti-Semitism. The anthology has a great deal on anti-Semitism; it seems that confronting or at least recognizing anti-Semitism is a large part of the Jewish lesbian identity. Is there any more positive Jewish element or Jewish dimension of the Jewish lesbian identity? Is it more difficult for Jewish lesbians—as contrasted with non-lesbian Jews—to identify themselves as Jews "outside anti-Semitism"?

BECK: I think what I said about it's being difficult to identify as a Jew outside the long shadow of anti-Semitism is true for every Jew—even Jews within temples and institutions. Anti-Semitism, particularly in the modern period, has just always been there as part of our consciousness. But this recognition does not take away the fact that there are ways in which we come together as Jews that are particularly affirming of Judaism.

I'd start with the notion of reclaiming our roots in the *shtetl* (East European townlet). I am particularly speaking now about *Ashkenazi* Jews [of European descent].

I think that the celebration of our foremothers whose strength was often needed in the *shtetl* to hold the family together is something which we see in ourselves and in our own mothers.

Then of course I would say we feel the roots of our radicalism to be very Jewish—the roots in the [Jewish Labor] Bund and in the civil rights movement. I really do see the Jewish involvement in lesbian feminism in a direct line with radical Jewish activity in this country. Caring about others is a part of Jewish tradition as is an emphasis on this life and *this* world, and making it a better place.

Then the emphasis on learning, which I think we really did all grow up with, and the joy in that learning. The way we see the world—which is a way of interpreting the world based on the full recognition of having a tradition different from the dominant one.

The celebration of our holidays is something that Jewish lesbians see as particularly Jewish, particularly as the Jewish calendar is a moon calendar. Here there is a real coming together of elements of lesbian culture which coincide with Jewish culture.

I think a lot of Jewish lesbians want to have children and I think that grows right out of the Jewish emphasis on children.

LILITH: Is that more common among Jewish lesbians than non-Jewish lesbians?

BECK: I think there is a movement in the lesbian community for lesbians to have children. But I have heard it reiterated particularly frequently among Jewish lesbians. I think probably more Jewish lesbians are more concerned and eager to have children because of that aspect of their growing up.

LILITH: There is really nothing in what you have just said that a Jew who is not a lesbian couldn't accept. What you said about women in the *shtetl* is something that women in the Jewish feminist movement have written and spoken about for quite a long time. That is the Jewish component of Jewish lesbian identity. But what is the particular Jewish lesbian component? Is there a particular Jewish lesbian heritage in addition to the Jewish heritage or the Jewish women's heritage?

BECK: The Jewish lesbian heritage is something that has been buried. There is one reference in *The Jewish Woman in America* [Baum, Hyman, Michel] that there were Jewish lesbians in the labor movement, but their names are not yet available to us. In terms of the specificity of the history, we are just beginning to try to uncover it. Part of what it means to affirm a lesbian identity is a kind of full and total acceptance of the female. Somehow the way in which Jewish lesbians have reclaimed the Jewish heritage is not totally a break, it's not something totally different but rather, an intensification of what other women have said.

The other thing that we have talked about is that there is something about the separation of men and women in the *shtetl* and even in some parts of Jewish culture still today, that perhaps even encourages a kind of lesbian being-in-the-world. Being with other women that intensely seems almost to make the female be the most important and central part of a woman's life. Many of us have talked about how in our families there is a whole female culture. You can draw a line from seeing the women be that close and that central to each other in your life toward a lesbian way of life which means that women take this to its fullest steps and say, "we want to live and be with other women and to love other women fully and not stop short."

The other part of Jewish tradition and culture that feeds into a lesbian way of being-in-the-world is that we as Jewish women are encouraged to be very affectionate and very physical with each other.

LILITH: You spoke about a certain invisibility as Jews Jewish women have experienced in the lesbian movement. At the same time do you have the feeling that regardless of whether the Jewish component is visible or not, Jewish lesbians are on the cutting edge of the movement?

BECK: I do think there is a tremendous amount of Jewish energy in the lesbian feminist movement. Many Jewish women have not wanted to recognize how much, partially for reasons of internalized anti-Semitism: namely, that when Jews have made ourselves visible as Jews, we have been seen as wanting to take over. That is part of the nature of anti-Semitism—that you don't have much space between being invisible as Jews or being too visible as Jews.

LILITH: But why is it that the minute we come out of the woodwork we are immediately accused of trying to run the world?

BECK: That is part of the very old pattern of anti-Semitism, and a way of keeping Jews in their place.

You know, it's really not so different from how it is to be a lesbian, if you think about it. There are a great many people who know lesbians are very active in the feminist movement and that's okay so long as they don't get up and say, we're lesbians. As soon as you begin to say, "we are active in this movement and we are lesbians," there is a sense of too much visibility and charges of a "lesbian takeover."

I think this is also the experience of

many groups that the society wants to keep in place. Groups that the society fears it tries to make invisible.

Making the connections between the various oppressions has been one of the most important theoretical tenets of the lesbian-feminist movement. Because the nature of anti-Semitism is very often just to ignore oppression of Jews, Jews have not been named in that theoretical stance as yet. Jewish lesbians are on the cutting edge of trying to make anti-Semitism a concern of the movement. Jewish lesbians are also very aware of the necessity of making connections with lesbian feminists of other minority groups, particularly lesbians of color.

LILITH: Has there been anything done along those lines?

BECK: It's just beginning. There was one dialogue that took place in Boston (published in *Conditions*) between several Jewish and Black women which just began to scratch the surface of the similarities and differences. It is a touchy subject because of the way in which the whole Jewish experience in the cities intersected with the rise of the Black Power movement. The factors are so many and so complicated and there is so much emotion involved, that it will take a lot of good will and a lot of willingness to face our own prejudgments before full dialogue can take place. But I think it is very important that it happened and I think that—I am hopeful that—with this book the dialogue will open up.

LILITH: Is there more anti-Semitism in the lesbian movement than the general women's movement? Or do Jewish lesbians seem to be more sensitive to it and have very acute antennae or constitute a kind of litmus test of anti-Semitism, able to pick up nuances and subtleties? If that is so, is it because they're more likely to be in contact with non-Jews than straight Jewish women?

BECK: That last point is probably true, because I think the lesbian feminist movement has brought people together who would probably never have made common cause without that particular bond. Jewish lesbian feminists are more likely to be in contact with non-Jews.

I don't think that there is more anti-Semitism in the lesbian feminist movement. What I do think is, when we experience it at all, it feels much more painful and it is much more unexpected because of the theoretical stance of the movement. We have seen the lesbian feminist movement as a place of refuge. When we hear something that is anti-Semitic in that space, it is much more serious, because that is the place that is supposed to be the protected place.

From the cover of *Nice Jewish Girls*

The labyris, a two-headed axe used by Amazon women, has been adopted by lesbians as a symbol of women's strength.

I also think that Jewish lesbians are more likely to be sensitive to anti-Semitism than straight Jewish women partially because I think lesbian feminists are more willing to be in touch with their own oppression.

I think some straight women might also feel more protected in their environment because they are not total outsiders in society, and therefore are perhaps less likely to perceive their vulnerability.

Some straight women may also be more likely to overlook anti-Semitism, because to the extent that you have a stake in preserving society as it is, you're likely, if you hear it expressed, to turn the other ear.

LILITH: What is the relationship, if any, between the nascent Jewish lesbian movement and the Jewish feminist movement?

BECK: So far I don't know that there have actually been a great many meeting points. But I do consider it all part of the same movement—Jewish women becoming radicalized wherever they are. I don't see it as two separate phenomena. I think that what we are seeing are two phenomena that are going to come together at some point. I hope that this book will catalyze the recognition of the heterosexist assumptions that so many Jewish women make, that they don't even know that they make.

LILITH: For example?

BECK: For example, their not being aware of the fact that there *are* Jewish lesbians. If you talk to many straight feminists, they know there are lesbians out there but they don't think of them as being right in their own community. I think that Jewish women have to realize that there are Jewish women who will end up with men and many who will not, that Jewish life must encompass the recognition.

LILITH: What would constitute acceptance by the community? Is it just acceptance of the fact that you are there, that you exist, that the way you live your lives is equally legitimate...?

BECK: I want to give you examples of some negative things I've experienced and maybe we can go on from there. I gave two symposia at Hillel in Madison, Wisconsin, the first in 1979 and the next one in 1980. The first time we did this at Hillel, one of the Hassidic rabbis who was studying in Wisconsin totally disrupted the meeting. He got up and started shouting, "Get out of my Judaism!!" This was one of the most painful experiences I have ever had.

I want to give you another instance. My mother knows I am a lesbian but she obviously was looking for some kind of support from her rabbi, because he had not been so pleasant to me. She went to him and asked, "Is it possible that Evie is a lesbian?" What she wanted from him was some affirmation of that because *she* knew the answer. Instead of giving her any kind of positive affirmation, he snapped at her and said: "That is impossible!" I think she was very hurt by that.

I teach Women's Studies. I teach Womens' *Jewish* Studies. Right now, I feel I could never come as an open Jewish lesbian and get a teaching job in any Jewish institution or even at any department of Jewish studies in the country because they are so homophobic. I would like to be able to take everything I know and use it for the purposes of enhancing Jewish life without having to cut away a part of who I am.

I have had better experiences. At a New Jewish Agenda meeting held in Madison, I spoke about the necessity for being considered a part of Judaism—not just let in by the back door but having it acknowledged fully, that there are among Jews lesbians and gay men and that they are as Jewish as anybody else and that one's choice of partner in no way should make anybody less Jewish.

I am concerned in reaching the active consciousness of the masses of Jews in this country. I would like their consciousness to include our existence as part of who they are, because in fact it is their children, their sisters and their relatives who are in the gay synagogues now. I am looking for a kind of affirmation that at the moment would not necessarily have to be included in the law itself.

What I guess I really hope for from

Nice Jewish Girls—What Made the Book Happen?

In Vienna in 1938, when I was five years old and Hitler came to power, visibility was not safe.

Men came and took my father away....I did not know why or where my father was being taken, nor how long he would be gone. Later I was told: to the camps—to Dachau, to Buchenwald. My mother took me with her to the Gestapo when she tried to get him released. After a year she succeeded; I don't know how or why.

When my father was still in the camps, my mother had arranged to have me, the elder child, sent to England where British citizens were taking in "endangered" European children. According to my mother, it had been easy to place me because I was so pretty (did not *look Jewish*, did she mean?). But I never went; she needed my father's permission—which he refused to send. Though he did not know if he would ever see any of us again, my father refused to split the family, even to save me.

Very often this year, when people asked me what I was working on, and I answered, "a book about Jewish lesbians," my answer was met with startled laughter and unmasked surprise bordering on disbelief: "Are there *many?*"

To me, these responses had the force of warnings.

I got the message. Or rather, it got to me. While I fought against silencing myself completely, I did begin to hesitate before answering, to assess the safety of the terrain.

I began to understand the limits that the dominant culture places on "otherness." You could be a Jew and people would recognize that as a religious or ethnic affiliation *or* you could be a lesbian and some people would recognize that as an "alternative lifestyle" or "sexual preference," but if you tried to claim both identities—publicly and politically—you were exceeding the limits of what was permitted to the marginal.

During the last seven years I had given a great deal of energy to the lesbian-feminist movement and had come to feel more at home among lesbian-feminists than I had ever felt anywhere before—until I realized that my Jewish identity was...invisible unless I made a point of mentioning it. I was pained but not surprised to feel invisible as a lesbian among Jews. I was terribly disappointed and confused to feel invisible as a Jew among lesbians....

To a great extent the energy for this book came from my desire to break the silence and the cycle of confusion: to refuse any longer to feel like a victim, to raise the issue. I had to find out whether the lesbian-feminist movement would accept me *as a Jew*, join in my fight. Whether *my* fight was also *our* fight.

[Eight years ago] I managed to rationalize my shock and dismay when I found the narrator of *Rubyfruit Jungle* describing the fat Jewish girl Barbara Spangenthau as someone who "always had her hand in her pants playing with herself, and worse, she stank. Until I was 15 I thought that being Jewish meant you walked around with your hand in your pants."

In 1974, as an emerging lesbian, I didn't want to admit that the movement's leading fiction writer was basing her humor on age-old anti-Semitic stereotypes. I simply couldn't afford to take it in. So I kept silent. In those early years of struggle it seemed unworthy to make a fuss. And worse—it seemed divisive. I could not yet claim my anger. I wanted too much to belong.

Even in 1981 while I was preparing this anthology, I hesitated to protest publicly the anti-Semitic and racist stereotypes in Noretta Koertge's [novel] *Who Was That Masked Woman?...*

Having broken her leg, the main character Tretona contemplates the wonders of the Kutschner rod technique being used to heal her—a technique she claims Nazi scientists had developed on American GIs: "She tried to figure out if it wasn't good after all that the Nazis had done the experiments."

This seemingly harmless question entirely obscures the fact that it was overwhelmingly *Jews* who were used for grotesque medical experiments by Nazi doctors. While the author makes these remarks in the voice of her character...the narrator in no way discredits or questions the character's integrity....

That virtually no reviews of these [and other] highly-praised and widely-read authors mention anti-Semitism is a symptom of how little consciousness there is of this issue.

While lesbian-feminists have increasingly begun to acknowledge diversity, anti-Semitism is still not taken seriously in the lesbian-feminist movement.

Anti-Semitism has not been included *by name* in the important litany of "isms" against which the movement has pledged itself to struggle: sexism, heterosexism, racism, classism, ageism, able-bodyism.

Some lesbian-feminist theorists claim that anti-racist work subsumes the fight against anti-Semitism, but I have not found that to be true in practice. For example, in an otherwise excellent workshop on "Racism and Lesbianism" held at the 1981 National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) Conference, in a discussion of the Ku Klux Klan, the Klan's anti-Semitism was not even mentioned until I brought it up. [Most often,] the attempt to include anti-Semitism in discussions of racism is rejected and sometimes met with a sense of outrage that Jews are trying to take over *again*.

The risks for both Jews and gentiles of entering into a dialogue were painfully demonstrated at an all-day workshop on "Jewish Lesbians and Anti-Semitism" held in Madison, Wisconsin in May 1979. At one point in the day, the Jewish lesbians asked that the group be divided, because the gentile lesbians' stories about their anti-Semitic backgrounds were creating pain for the Jewish women.

While everyone understood the need to separate at that time, the non-Jewish lesbians were loathe to discuss their anti-Semitism with each other and found it difficult to do so. Some expressed jealousy of the developing close ties they sensed among the Jewish lesbians who were, for the first time, coming together around their common heritage, as lesbians *and* as Jews. [Their] feeling of exclusion, though understandable, does not differ in kind from some heterosexual women's responses to lesbian bonding.

[This book] has already had an impact on the lesbian-feminist community. More people acknowledge the need to deal with anti-Semitism. ... A greater sense of Jewish pride is emerging. Jewish lesbians have become more thoughtful about themselves *as Jews*....

A dialogue has begun.

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the Jewish community is that the recognition that the diversity of what it means to be Jewish also include Jewish women who choose other women as their life partners and that we are all part of what it means to be Jewish.

LILITH: As there is growing anti-Semitism, I think the tendency in the community is to turn very much inward and close ranks and be afraid that any rocking of the boat will plop everybody right into the water with all the sharks....

BECK: Well, I think the Jewish community has this very stubborn and blind side. There were always fanatical forces resistant to change, so I suppose that is also very Jewish, but I do believe that eventually they will have to open up some way.

LILITH: What gives you that faith that lesbians will eventually be accepted by the community?

BECK: One of the things I see as most important to being Jewish is a knowledge of survival; as Jews we are all survivors. In order to survive, Judaism is probably going to have to open itself up to that diversity or it will not survive.

LILITH: It might self-destruct?

BECK: Well, it would die out. It would fall into the hands of a few fanatics and I don't think it can survive as that kind of a fringe fanatic group.

I perceive Judaism as being very life-affirming, and I think it is that life-affirming quality which may allow Jews to open up toward greater and greater acceptance of diversity.

Dispatch from Chicago

I'm a member of the Jewish Lesbian Group of Chicago.

I joined after leaving a five-member lesbian support group which I had joined last summer.

In order to join this small "support group," I was first interviewed and then accepted into the group along with another newcomer, Beryl, who was also Jewish. I believed that they would give me the social niche I needed.

Then came Christmas 1981. The three goyim in the group began planning a Christmas party. I'd assumed as lesbians they'd know enough about oppression, invisibility and denial to acknowledge that two out of five in the group were Jewish. It follows that the name and purpose of the party would automatically change. I spoke out strongly about their pretending Beryl and I didn't exist.

This comment touched off an explosion. The "majority" (three out of five) refused to change the party's name. One woman said, "Christians are the majority in this country, and you'll just have to deal with it." She continued, "What are we supposed to do? Celebrate every holiday of every little minority group in this country? Next thing you know, we'll be expected to celebrate some holiday of the Muru-Buru, just because there are Blacks in this country!" Another woman said that she wished I'd vomit up my rage elsewhere.

Beryl then tried explaining to the goyim a little of what Christmas has always meant for us—at best exclusion, an alien religion forced down our throats at every turn, and at worst, a pogrom season, the murder and rape of our grandmothers. She said that calling the party a Christmas party and expecting us to attend was like expecting black women to celebrate the birth of the Klu Klux Klan.

The gentile women listened impatiently to her explanation and then dismissed it. What bothers me is that I don't think anything I said or did made the gentile lesbians think about their anti-Semitism and disregard for Jewish lesbians. More than that, the gentile women had me thinking that how I went about describing my feelings about anti-Semitism was wrong.

Beryl and I have joined the Jewish Lesbian Group of Chicago. We meet every other week. We talk about our families and the differing levels of acceptance we've received from them. We talk about anti-Semitism and how to fight it. We share the scattered bits of Judaism we've salvaged from our different backgrounds, which range from Orthodox to no background at all. And we celebrate together, share Shabbat, rewrite the Pesach seder, sing Hebrew songs we learned as children and re-learn the Yiddish songs we have only the faintest memories of.

I feel that I've gone from a group that's suffocating to one that's refreshing and a source of joy.

—Judy Berns

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by Glenn Richter and
Reena Sigman Friedman

SURVIVING SIBERIA

Ida Nudel Beats the Odds

Ida Nudel, the courageous woman known throughout the world as the "guardian angel" of Soviet Jewish Prisoners of Conscience—men and women imprisoned for their activities in the emigration movement—has survived four brutal years in Siberian exile only to be refused permission to leave for Israel.

In the ten years since her application to emigrate to Israel was denied by Soviet authorities, Nudel, now 51, waged an extraordinary one-woman campaign on behalf of the Jewish prisoners, providing them with both moral and political support. She was sentenced to exile in Siberia in June, 1978 on charges of "malicious hooliganism" for her part in a demonstration by Soviet Jewish women refuseniks, Soviet Jews denied permission to emigrate to Israel.

Released from exile in March, Nudel has been refused permission to live in Moscow. To date, there is no indication that she will be permitted to leave the Soviet Union. Said Soviet officials: "267 million people have made lives for themselves in the Soviet Union" and Nudel is advised to do the same.

Glenn Richter is National Coordinator of the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry.
Reena Sigman Friedman is News Editor of LILITH.

Ida Nudel was born in the Crimea in 1931, the child of assimilated parents, both Communist Party members. Her love of Zion may be traced to the influence of her grandparents. In their youth, both were members of Hashomer Hatzair, the Socialist Zionist pioneering movement, and dreamed, in vain, of settling in what was then Palestine. The two grandparents, as well as the family's aunts, uncles and cousins, were all murdered by the Nazis in a single day in 1942.

Ida's father, Yakov, a Communist Party official and officer in the Red Army, fell in the Battle of Stalingrad in 1942. Ida's mother, Anna, managed to support Ida and her sister Elana by working as a kindergarten teacher.

At the time of the infamous "doctors' plot" of 1953, in which Jewish physicians were accused of attempting to murder Soviet leaders, Nudel, the only Jew in her university class, felt the sting of suspicion. Rather than give in to fear, she began reading whatever she could find on Judaism and Israel, and secretly listened to Kol Israel shortwave broadcasts from Israel.

According to Elana, Ida's developing Jewish consciousness was strengthened by Israel's miraculous victory in the 1967 Six-Day War. Thousands of Soviet Jews applied for exit visas. Among them were Ida, Elana, Elana's husband Arieh Friedman and their seven-year-old son Ya'akov.

Within a year, Elana and her family received the coveted visas, and left the Soviet Union in April 1972 for Israel. Ida was consistently refused a visa on the grounds that she had "access to state secrets" at her job as an economist-engineer at the Institute for Planning and Production, where she checked hygienic standards at food stores.

Idá became a member of the community of refuseniks. She began to devote her considerable energy to the Jewish emigration movement and especially to relieving the prisoner's plight.

Our Ida Nudel, a collection of testimonies of former prisoners and refuseniks, published in 1980 by Israeli Women for Ida Nudel, chronicles her efforts on their behalf.

Former Prisoner of Conscience Ya'akov Suslensky said that Nudel "was the first person to publicly demonstrate her total identification with the prisoners and to wage a campaign for the right of emigration to Israel."

Nudel collected information regarding each prisoner in a card file; sent cables to Soviet officials and Western leaders urging better treatment, particularly improved medical care, for prisoners; and publicized their plights, often by sitting outside the prison walls for days at a time.

Union of Councils for Soviet Jews

On a more personal level, Nudel sent letters of encouragement to prisoners, informing them of the latest news from Israel and other Jewish communities; sent them fancy postcards and other items that they could trade for food; gave of her own meager financial resources to help prisoners and their families; housed prisoners in her tiny Moscow apartment once they were released; established contact between prisoners and visitors from outside the Soviet Union, and ensured that letters and food packages from the outside reached the prisoners.

Amy Schuman, who visited the Soviet Union with her mother in April, 1980, reported in the Cleveland feminist paper *What She Wants:*

"Ida collected and distributed clothes, food and other articles to the prisoners. She devised schemes for smuggling valuable items into prison so that prisoners could bribe camp personnel. She concocted a faultless method of baking vitamins into cakes, and sending prisoners boxes of white chocolate which was not recognizably edible...Ida's apartment served as a headquarters for all Moscow efforts on behalf of Jewish dissidents serving prison terms."

As a result of her activities, Nudel lost her job at the Institute and was forced to earn a meager living as a cleaning woman, maid and nanny.

She was frequently followed, interrogated and beaten. Her phone was confiscated, and a KGB microphone hung from an openly gouged-out hole in her apartment. On several occasions, she was arrested and thrown in the so-called "drunk tank" with other activists. Her diary describes one of these episodes in passionate and eloquent language:

October 25th: I leave the house in the morning. Within minutes I hear foot-steps behind me. Two men strike my back. I fall down. They grab me and drag me into the gutter. A car arrives. I am shoved inside and we leave. They ignore me when I ask them to identify themselves.

They physically assault my body. Dirty hands touch my breasts, my whole body, lifting my skirt and crawling into my pants. They find no atom bombs or guns.

They put me in a cell and leave me. I am cold in body and soul. From time to time I fall into a dreamlike state, then again awaken.

October 26th: My back hurts from lying on naked boards, my arms hurt from being hit and used as a pillow. My coat is too short to cover me entirely, and I try to move it in stages to warm my legs and then my back. It seems to me that it must be day—but I was not given either a drop of water or a piece of bread.

I lie there and think. I think of Jews being kept in camps and that each day of their lives is like mine yesterday and today. I think of Sylva Zalmanson [sentenced in the Leningrad trial and subsequently released—Ed.]. Yesterday was her birthday, the fourth she has spent in prison and there are many more such days awaiting her, a whole eternity. I think of Jews who emigrate, not experiencing the 'friendly kick in the teeth,' without realizing how lucky they are.

I think of my friends who today are in cells. I think of my Jewish nation, how open-handedly it has given and still gives its genius to Russia, and how inhuman is the Russian desire to stifle our national consciousness. I think of myself. I open my eyes and the walls reflect the shadow of the gratings. I hear outside the door the measured steps of the guard.

What awaits me?

On June 1, 1978, Nudel and other Russian Jewish refusenik women and their children planned to hold a peaceful demonstration to mark International Children's Day, and call for exit visas. The KGB imposed a curfew on all the women and surrounded Nudel's building, preventing her from leaving her apartment. In response, she hung a banner from her balcony which read, "Let Me Go To Israel."

After some KGB men on the next balcony destroyed the banner, Ida placed a large Star of David in her window. The KGB promptly shattered the window.

Former refusnik and neighbor Abram Nizhnikov recalled the scene:

There were plainclothesmen on the next balconies and windows, poking long sticks at the innocent sign. One of them from the upper floor had a long rope with a heavy metal thing at the end. I became very fearful for Ida's life. But they ended up breaking her kitchen window. These actions caused a crowd near the house. Somebody shouted: 'Jews are rebelling! I wish Stalin and Hitler were here.'

Ignoring a charge of "malicious hooliganism," Ida joined another protest for exit visas three days later in Trubnaya Square near the Kremlin, during which she wore sandwich boards protesting Soviet emigration policy. Once again she was accused of disorderly behavior and disobedience to the authorities. On June 21, 1978, she was brought to the People's Court of the Volgograd District of Moscow.

During the trial, Ida was not permitted to have legal representation or witnesses testifying on her behalf or friends in the courtroom. She declared before the court:

For the past seven years, I learned to walk proudly as a human being and as a Jew. These were years of constant, daily struggle for myself and others. My heart was filled with sublime, incomparable emotion each time I managed to lend a helping hand to yet another victim of oppression. This feeling may be akin to that of a woman creating new life. Should the rest of my days be gray and regimented,

these past seven years would warm my heart with the knowledge that my life was not lived in vain.

Nudel was sentenced to four years of internal exile in Siberia for her actions on June first.

The slow train ride to Siberia was deliberately lengthened. The journey, which ordinarily takes two days, lasted a month because Ida was transported along with women criminals and the train stopped many times en route to pick up passengers at various prisons. The women beat Ida until her face swelled up and her glasses were broken.

Ida was brought to the swampy hamlet of Krivosheino in the Tomsk region of Siberia and placed in a tiny, unprotected room of a male hostel housing some 60 hardened prisoners—and other criminals, murderers considered too dangerous to return to society. The men were armed with knives and almost constantly drunk.

The physical conditions were deplorable. The temperature often reached 60 degrees below zero Centigrade in her 12-square-meter room. She had to walk long distances in all weather to get water, which was filled with rust. The hostel's one washroom was covered with drunks' vomit, and rats ran freely throughout the hostel.

The only food she was able to get was stale bread, some canned foods and milk once a week from the village store. Ida's job as a night guard required her to walk outside even during the bitter Siberian winters, when the temperatures reached 40 degrees below zero degrees Centigrade.

Ida wrote to other prisoners but for a year refused to accept mail from abroad, even from her sister. She requested, instead, that petitions be sent to those in power to free all the Prisoners of Conscience. An American woman who visited the Soviet Union last year was told that food packages sent to Nudel by those working on her behalf were often passed on to other prisoners. "Even in her Siberian exile, she continued to act as a rescuing angel for other refuseniks," the tourist reported.

Although she was permitted one visitor every month or two, very few

Refused the right to return to Moscow upon release from Siberia, Nudel wandered from city to city, finally being allowed to settle near Kishinev. Her address is: **Sovietskaya St. 69, apt. 2, Bendery, 278100, Moldavian SSR, USSR.** LILITH urges readers to write their legislators asking them to urge Andropov to grant her exit visa.

managed to reach her. Former prisoner Sender Levinson described Ida's surroundings:

I walked past Krivosheino. After a couple of kilometers there were no longer any houses; even the muddy road had disappeared. I was in the forest. I stood in front of an old barrack with small windows. The first people I met were two drunks arguing about something, unleashing a string of obscenities.

I knocked at the door, whose missing lock was replaced by a catch. A thin little woman appeared. Her wide-open eyes sparkled feverishly. She pressed herself against my chest, her shoulder quivering as she cried.

It grew dark, and we lit a candle. It was Rosh Hashanah *eve. "Next year in Jerusalem." Tears filled Ida's eyes. Through the cracks in the window the wind was blowing and the candlelight flickered. Behind the door, the drunks' argument had turned into a fight. We could hear the sounds of a chair being broken. Someone was calling for help.*

"There are mostly former criminals here," Ida said, "murderers and bandits. They're not permitted to live in the cities. They've lost their human face. They've tried many times to break into my room. When I go to bed I always have a knife under my pillow. Of course, I won't be able to kill them, but at least I can kill myself," she whispered.

I know Ida has a heart disease and permanent trouble with her stomach. When I asked her about her health she didn't answer, but once when she believed I wasn't watching she took a pill. She's not accustomed to complaining.

These conditions were also documented in a 20-minute silent film secretly taken by a fellow prisoner and smuggled out of The Soviet Union.

As a result of Western pressure aroused by the film and other reports smuggled out of Russia, Ida was finally given permission to live alone in a wooden hut. But psychologically she was given no rest by the townspeople, who attacked and ostracized her. In a tape smuggled to the West in 1979, Nudel said:

I am all alone in my little room, which is my fortress, my bedroom, my kitchen, my toilet, my washroom and even my laundry....Even Kafka could not have dreamed up such a situation. Village people nearby are afraid to speak to me. They are afraid of any contact at all with me. Even children who touched and petted my dog were later questioned by the police.

In 1980, the local press charged that she was poisoning the town's wells. On April 27, 1981, her 50th birthday, she was detained at the village police station.

Ida's already frail health—she suffered from kidney disease and a heart problem—deteriorated sharply under these harsh conditions. She was hospitalized in the city of Tomsk in Siberia in August 1979, where local doctors recommended that she go to Moscow for diagnosis. In October 1979, she addressed an open letter to the Soviet authorities demanding permission to travel to Moscow for medical care; the Soviets responded that she was not ill. Finally, she suffered a severe heart attack that same month and her sister feared Nudel would not be able to survive another Siberian winter.

Despite such fears, Nudel survived her four years in exile and completed her sentence in March 1982. Members of the Columbia University chapter of the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ) who spoke with Nudel by phone shortly after her release said the Soviets have refused her permission to live in Moscow. She was instructed to "rejoin the mainstream of Soviet life." To date, there is no indication that she will be granted an exit visa. Since her release, according to various reports, Nudel visited a Moscow synagogue and spent some time in a hospital.

According to recent information received by the SSSJ, in early May Nudel was officially denied a residence permit for Moscow, despite the fact that she owns an apartment there. (At the present time, Nudel remains in Moscow, but could be forcibly expelled to the city's outlying areas at any time.) Dr. Isai Goldstein, a fellow refusenik, reported that, although Nudel is very weak and requires medical tests, she has been refused permission to enter Moscow hospitals because she is a non-resident.

Just as Nudel's sentence ended in March 1982, members of the Swedish Parliament nominated her for the Nobel Peace Prize. Whether or not she receives the award, she has already won the love of many thousands of people throughout the world. In her four years of exile, Ida received some 10,000 letters of support, and realizes that many more were sent but never reached her.

After more than a decade, Nudel is back at square one: seeking approval of her exit application to Israel.

For Ida Nudel, the cherished dream of "Next year in Jerusalem" cannot come a minute too soon.

Battli
Sexism
Jewish S

by Susan Weidman

As the "People of the Book," Jews are expected both to revere scholarship in others, and to engage in lifelong learning ourselves. Yet for thousands of years, Jewish study was closed off to girls and women. Much formal, highly valued learning was denied Jewish women—sometimes by religious opinion or tradition, sometimes because family priorities dictated that only sons would study, sometimes by the subtle message that even secular study for women was somehow fraught with peril, as if too much education would detract from our "ornamental" purpose in life. Females rarely learned Hebrew—the key to Jewish study—except enough to chant the requisite blessings.

Today, while most Jewish education on the elementary through high school level is open to females, more parents enroll sons in Jewish schools than daughters. Perhaps this is because some Hebrew training is needed for the Bar Mitzvah that most Jewish parents feel is mandatory regardless of how assimilated they are, while Bat Mitzvah (which would require the same training if it were considered an equally important ritual event) is clearly still seen by many parents as a celebration of choice. One father is quoted in the *Long Island Jewish World* as saying:

"Joining a Temple is expensive, but if I had a son instead of daughters, I would have felt obligated to send my son to Hebrew school....My daughters like Yiddish school and that's enough for me."

There are many varieties of religious education, each with its own bias and its own problems around gender equality in a Jewish context. There are strictly Orthodox yeshivas (all-day schools), which may have complete separation of the sexes into different schools or totally segregated classes. Orthodox, Conservative and Reform movements also operate Hebrew day schools, all-day schools covering both a Judaic studies and a secular curriculum, with varying commitments to redressing traditional inequalities between the sexes. These differences depend less on the denominational affiliation of the school than on the personality and consciousness of the director and the staff.

Then there are many kinds of supplemental Jewish schools, meeting after public school hours or on weekends.

Unfortunately, despite the wide range of options available to parents who want to give their children a Jewish education, all the choices are flawed to one degree or another by sexist stereotyping of girls and women.

Discrimination against our daughters still goes on in Jewish education today, much of it in the "hidden curriculum"—that set of messages transmitted through the pictures in the classroom, the teachers' attitudes toward girls and boys, the way material is presented in school texts and storybooks. Amid the talk of grants for innovative Jewish educational programs, experimental materials in the Hebrew classroom, new curricula that will turn students on to Jewish learning, this inherent sexism continues—even in what passes in the 80's as enlightened curriculum taught in an egalitarian atmosphere.

Our daughters—and our sons—are still learning that Jewish history has been the history of Jewish men only, that the only leaders in the Jewish community then and now are men, and that there are inherent differences between girls and boys that justify the indefinite perpetuation of these abuses.

The only hope of encouraging more Jewish schools to eliminate the sexism that exists at present, and to prepare programs that will present girls as well as boys with a positive image of women's many roles in Judaism, is for parents and concerned lay people and professionals to bring into *Jewish* education their *feminist* perspective on raising free children.

How to Monitor Your Child's School

Changing the atmosphere begins with having information about what you'd ideally like to see in the classroom, and about where the reality fails to match these ideals. Observe in the school whenever possible, and ask the children questions about what goes on there, not just about the classroom work itself.

• **Is the faculty co-ed? Or are all the teachers women and the administrators men?** Some schools say they can only afford to hire women, for whom the laughable salary is considered (by the school's administration, at least) to be pin money, and whose part-time schedule suits their family life just fine. An Orthodox day school administrator admitted to a questioning parent: "Of course the teachers are all women. What man could live on these salaries, after all?"

One faculty structure, at a Conservative Hebrew day school, had one male, at the top and women in *all other positions.* This situation is, alas, hardly unique. According to a 1979 report by the American Association for Jewish Education, less than 10% of principals or chief administrators are women. Women are paid less for the same or comparable work, and promoted much less frequently than men. Women teachers may need to have a more positive sense of themselves—and certainly need to achieve pay equality—before they can convey positive images of womanhood to students.

• **Is there a dress code that discriminates against girls**—*i.e.*, skirts always, or on Erev Shabbat? No girl can function comfortably in the playground in a skirt. There is also a message transmitted when girls are required to wear skirts each day: that they are to make themselves into ob-

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This article, in somewhat different form, will appear in Susan Weidman Schneider's complete resource book for Jewish women, to be published next year by Simon & Schuster.

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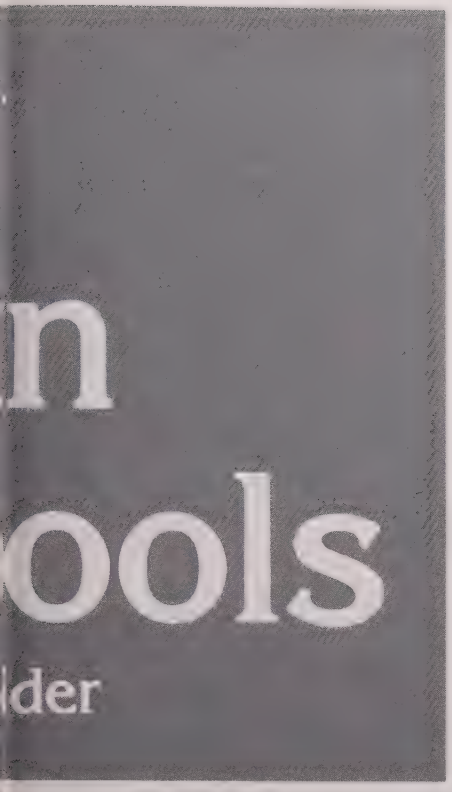


jects, that they are to dress in a way that makes them (and the boys) conscious of their roles and their gender, in what should be a genderless situation. One teacher, protesting the situation in a Hebrew day school with just such a dress code for the girls, commented: "No matter how young they are, it doesn't take long before boys in the playground will tease a girl about seeing her underpants."

Jewish schools can always fall back on a Torah rationale for keeping males and females from cross-dressing. But one day school, asked to defend its anti-culotte regulation on these grounds, replied that "culottes aren't *boys'* clothing but we *still* don't allow them for girls. Skirts are just our school uniform. Even some non-religious private schools require uniforms, so just think of it that way."

• **Is there unnecessary segregation of the sexes?** In one school even class lists were separated according to gender—not even the names could touch! The underlying reality—and the lists were a clue—was that the social life of the students was also rigidly stratified by sex even in the primary grades even the seating arrangements at non-religious functions were by girls' tables and boys' tables.

• **What pictures are on the wall?** In one school, the corridors were lined with emotional blown-up photographs of Israeli scenes: men praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, soldiers in uniform at prayer, the shofar being blown by an old man with a *tallit* (prayer shawl) covering his head, men dancing with the Torahs on Simchat Torah. Not one picture showed a woman. The message was that women were—and should be—invisible in Jewish life; not heard, and not even seen!

• **What hidden curriculum is presented by the images in textbooks and storybooks?** According to a 1975 study prepared by the reform movement's Religious Action Center in Washington:

"Most women are portrayed as housewives, while men are seen as doctors, judges, builders, etc. All temple activities are male-dominated with rabbis, presidents, and members of the Boards of Trustees pictured as men. Men carry the Torah, read from the Torah, etc. Men play the more important roles while women, if they are portrayed as active in synagogue life at all, serve in the Sisterhood and are shown as part of the congregation at worship, or opening the Ark, at best.

"Males are always shown as brighter and more active than females. In too many instances, the majority of main characters are male. Bible stories, history books and Hebrew books neglect the role of women, both historically and in story material."

An even more pernicious example is the attractively illustrated *Sh'ma* series of storybooks published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. One, entitled *About Learning*, shows 133 males and only 24 females; worse, however, than this numerical imbalance is where the women and girls appear in the book.

In the sections "Torah is for Learning," "A Leader is for Teaching," and others, the illustrations show *men* teaching, holding the Torah, being wise; most of those learning are boys and men. But as soon as we get to the section "A Heart is for Caring" we have pictures of girls and women. A mother bends to minister to her little daughter. Another woman kneels in supplication. Worse, the Biblical tale used to illustrate the concept is the one where King Solomon decides who is the real mother of a disputed baby. We finally have a section (though stereotyped) where females are shown, and the story told is of competitiveness and manipulation, in a situation that had to be resolved by a wise male.

Though the book was originally published in 1971, it is still widely distributed and read, its alluring artwork making it even more damaging than some of the tackier sexist Jewish children's stories on the market. This series looks as good as the best secular children's books, and therefore may be taken more seriously by children than some of the other storybooks that sensitive parents would reject outright.

Dr. Gladys Rosen, convenor of a "consultation" on the portrayal of girls and women in school materials at the American Jewish Committee in 1978, writes:

In most study materials, the men have "the most highly prized characteristics such as intelligence, initiative and emotional strength while women have been defined in socio-biological terms with their functions largely limited to the home and family life."

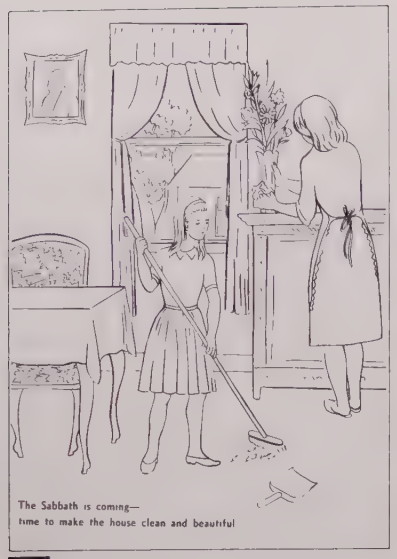
The texts that most schools use have few if any portrayals of girls and women in active roles in Jewish life. Jewish history, for example, is taught as the history of Jewish men. The few women who've had a role in shaping that history can be counted on one hand. And can be named by even fewer students.

As an exercise, a teacher in a Hebrew High School classroom asked her students, all of whom had had several years of after-school Hebrew school using standard texts, to name ten famous Jewish men and women. No one could name more than three women. With the exception of Golda Meir there was absolutely no sense of what roles women had played in Jewish life.

• **Try to evaluate individual teachers** on the staff both by sitting in the classroom when possible and by talking with them. Some may *not* support the institutionalized sexism of the Jewish schools. In one very gender-conscious Orthodox yeshiva, for instance, the male gym teacher insisted that girls participate in the same sports activities as boys (though of course the two sexes didn't play *together* at gym, and the boys *did* take up the lion's share of the gym space when sharing was necessary!). Another feminist reports:

"I went into a meeting with my son's new sixth grade Hebrew day school teacher very suspicious. He looked like a very traditional young man, and I figured that he must be giving the students the party line on roles for men and women in the Bible and in Judaism. (I feel strongly that a limited view of women is as bad for my son to learn as my daughter.)

"Responding to a question, he said, 'We stop and discuss the prayers we're saying. For example, when we come to the prayer that the boys say each morning, thanking God for not having made them woman, I have told them that some people have interpreted that to mean that Jewish law has divided things up so that men are responsible for some rituals and women for others, or that certain mitzvot are reserved for women and others for men. I tell them that I don't interpret the prayers that way, but that they were written in a time when people did believe that men and women had very different roles to play in Jewish life.'"



A.

B.

C.

A. *What is wrong with this picture from* The Sabbath Coloring Book? **B.** Hear O Israel: About Learning *shows women competing with each other, fighting over the baby held by wise King Solomon, asked to solve the women's dispute.* **C.** *The standard flag handed out to children on Simchat Torah presents Jewish worship as an all-male preserve.*

Tactics and Strategies for Change

Armed with the results of your own observations, point out what you've seen to other parents, in the hope of enlisting some of them as allies. Parents seem to divide roughly into two camps—those who know the traditional sources and have a good Jewish education, but not much knowledge about the harm that sexism can do both to girls and to boys; and those who know about the dangers of limiting their daughters' (and sons') options but who have only limited Jewish backgrounds themselves and are therefore uneasy about rocking the Jewish boat.

Remember that a school supported largely by Jewish community funds—usually through the local Jewish Federation—will be much more likely to respond to parental pressure for change than will a "private" Hebrew school, whose principal is also often the principal fundraiser. In the private schools, the principal's accountability is chiefly to the few wealthy donors who support the school (or, in the case of after-school schools, the synagogue). A community-supported school resembles a public school in that the parents have some voice in how things ought to be run. There may even be an "elected" school board which oversees educational policy, as opposed to a Board of Trustees, which, in effect, owns the school.

Here are some things a parent or parents' group can do:

• **Try to make sure that the parents association holds at least two open meetings each year,** rather than handling all business through "class mothers," or "liaison officers" who filter any suggestions and problems through to the administration. Open meetings, with agendas announced in advance, but with open microphone time, allow for some free discussion of the issues concerning gender roles in the school. At least in an open forum you're assured that the protests of the concerned parents won't get lost in the "liaison pipeline" that works in many schools to keep information away from the top leadership.

• **Put forth the name of a local expert on non-sexist childrearing** as a possible speaker at a PTA meeting. In the discussion period following the speaker's talk, make sure that someone asks about and records the suggestions and comments on how non-sexist practices can be brought into the classroom. (Be prepared to be that "plant" in the audience asking for these suggestions.) Take notes and follow up.

• **Try to identify those teachers who might support your vision of a more nearly egalitarian school.** They might be very receptive to having parents present them with hard-to-find material, or welcome any other parental input. (See resource box for where to order some of these.)

Teachers can sensitize students to understand the bias that has left them with such gaps in their knowledge. Annette Daum, a master teacher herself, has designed a course to create such sensitization (see box); even grammar exercises can be used as lessons in the limits of gender-linked associations. The course, "Male and Female in Religion" has two goals for its first session:

1) to have the students examine the school curriculum to see how educational material presents the roles of men and women; and

2) to have the students recommend methods of avoiding role stereotyping in the religious school curriculum.

Students draw pictures and write descriptions of the "Jewish mother" *and* the "Jewish father," so that they *see* where their own biases are.

They go on to explore Biblical stereotyping of men and women, and to rewrite some inaccurate, but commonly accepted English translations of Biblical Hebrew so as to restore them to their original and more egalitarian meaning.

One session is devoted to Jewish ritual, and the students are encouraged to write new ceremonies—for example, to celebrate the naming of a newborn daughter. Another focuses on Passover and the need to explore and expand upon the role of women in the Exodus story: Miriam, Jocheved, Zipporah, the midwives.

Daum's course includes a session on women in Jewish history, particularly emphasizing the contribution of American Jewish women from Revolutionary times to the present. Some of the names on her list: Ernestine Rose, Rebecca Gratz and Hannah Solomon. Sometimes just looking for information on these women is a shock—there's almost nothing on any women in standard Jewish reference books.

As their consciousness is raised through an understanding of the paucity of information about women in Jewish history, students begin to look at the language in which the history and liturgy were written—and who was writing them—and the class prepares a nonsexist service for the entire religious school. Daum says that "the language of prayer, especially language about God, is the most difficult to deal with. Students had difficulty understanding the problem until I substituted 'She' for 'He' in every prayer."

One particularly useful aspect of the course is that it teaches the students to evaluate educational materials for them-

selves. With this approach, even negative or limiting portrayals of women can be useful: correcting them becomes a good learning device.

• **Get the teachers to let you bring into the classroom men and women from the community**—women rabbis, cantors, and experts in various fields of Judaica; men who are engaged in non-traditional pursuits (e.g., have a man who's a good cook come in and share his favorite holiday recipes, or a man who's a weaver show how he makes a *tallit*). Your hidden agenda, of course, is to have the children see these figures as role models, shaking loose the images implanted on their retinas by the rigidly defined men's and women's tasks pictured in most books and Jewish posters.

• **Fight the dress code.** A Conservative Hebrew day school was attempting to formulate a new dress code for the children, in which girls would be required to wear skirts at all times, not for *religious* but allegedly for *aesthetic* reasons. A group of parents met with the rabbi in charge of the school, and listed the reasons they opposed the change. Once the school administration was willing to discuss the issue, the parents (fathers as well as mothers) argued their case so strongly that the dress code was completely changed. Now it encourages "dressing especially nicely" for Erev Shabbat.

In the process of waging their battle, some of the parents learned a lesson that they could apply to other school situations as well: that religion is sometimes the handmaiden for the policies that the school's administrator wanted to employ anyway, with no awareness of his own hypocrisy.

• **Change the bulletin boards.** In one school—despite walls with posters showing Mommy at home in an apron with Dvoreleh and David and the dog, Daddy going off to work with a briefcase —one single parent head-of-household got the school to recognize the fact that more than 75% of its students came from families other than the four-member one up on the wall.

She suggested the children bring in and post their own family pictures. The children felt much more comfortable seeing photographs on the wall of their own families at various Jewish celebrations—at weddings, in a Succah, holding a fresh-baked challah, etc. The children were better able to feel comfortable that Judaism was for them too, not just for the Dick-and-Jane style of nuclear family.

• **Bring in a list** (or **some samples**) **of nonsexist books for Jewish children** (see resource box). Suggest that some of these books be ordered for the annual book fair —most schools hold these in conjunction with Jewish Book Month in November.

Protest to the librarian about any book your child brings home from Hebrew school that is especially limiting in its representation of girls and women. Better yet is to shore up the library's holdings by making a gift to the library of a nonsexist book (or poster) in honor of your child's birthday, or in commemoration of any other event. Offer the librarian a copy of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' guidelines for authors (see box) so that s/he can have some tools with which to evaluate new books.

• **Car-pooling** or just transporting the children to Hebrew school is a killer for many parents and especially mothers, upon whom the burden usually falls. Point out to the school that there will not always be a large pool of unemployed mothers who can be called upon to chauffeur. Suggest van service, paid for by the parents who use it.

Where to Find Support

There are educators who lead in-service consciousness-raising groups for teachers and parents to help them understand the issues, and to help them use the materials they have to sensitize the students. For further information:

Speakers Bureau
LILITH Magazine
250 W. 57th St.
New York, NY 10019

Annette Daum
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Ave.
New York, NY 10021
(Also from this address you can order the UAHC *Guidelines for Authors*, which suggests ways of eliminating gender bias in texts and storybooks, and "Male and Female in Religion," a course outline.)

Speakers Bureau / Feminist Task Force
Coalition on
Alternatives in Jewish Education
468 Park Ave. So., Room 904
New York, NY 10016

To inform yourself about films you could suggest to the school or order for a parents' group, see "An evaluative guide to media materials for use in Jewish schools, camps, youth groups" available from:

Jewish Media Service
Jewish Welfare Board
15 East 26 St.
New York, NY 10010

Out of the Conservative movement comes a periodical with excellent reviews of books and curricula relevant to Jewish educators—and, by extension, to parents:

The Melton Center Newsletter
Jewish Theological Seminary
3080 Broadway
New York NY 10025

Aside from keeping your eyes open for new (and, hopefully, egalitarian) Jewish books and films for your children, you can connect with a network of Jewish educators and other professionals to keep yourself (and by extension your child's school) informed of new programs, texts, and curricula.

Workbooks published by Alternatives in Jewish Education, 3945 S. Oneida St., Denver CO 80237 tend to have an egalitarian (and non-denominational) approach to many aspects of Jewish life, including life-cycle events that involve children and some of the more painful transitions in life such as divorce and death. You are pretty safe with almost any of the books and mini-courses on their list.

For suggestions of questions to ask of your child's school, and an extensive checklist to identify and eliminate sex stereotyping in the classroom, Dr. Carol Poll, sex desegregation specialist, has compiled the *Sex Equity Resource Guide* published by the New York City public schools. It's available from:

Sex Desegregation Program
Board of Education
110 Livingston St.
Brooklyn NY 11201

Also:

TABS: Aids for Ending Sexism
in Schools
744 Carroll St.
Brooklyn NY 11215

This booklet has helpful suggestions about educational sexism in general that can be applied to Jewish schools.

For adults guiding young children beyond stereotypes: *Equal Play*, a quarterly resource magazine from,

Women's Action Alliance
370 Lexington Ave.
New York NY 10017

Teaching your Children to make Changes

Of course if the weight of these suggestions come from home and not from the school—and especially if there seems to be little support for addressing issues of equality in the classroom—you might want to discuss with your child the risks involved in trying to make change her/himself.

Speaking out, or even asking questions about equality, may earn short-term disapproval, or may get your child labelled a "troublemaker." One young woman in an Orthodox high school for girls was warned by a teacher not to be outspoken, or the rabbis who directed the school would see her as "a bad match" and withhold introductions to eligible young men. Obviously, cases this extreme are not common.

If queries and even protests about the portrayal of women in the school setting are backed by some information, the student is likely to be respected for her interest, especially if the teacher is a woman, which, as we know, is usually the case.

Our sons as well as our daughters need to be encouraged to speak out when they recognize that a certain course, or textbook, or picture shows a limited and incorrect view of Jewish women. It may be harder for them because they see themselves as primarily unaffected by such sexism, and they may be subject to disapprobation or scorn from boys less sensitive to the issues. But this is a marvelous opportunity for them to experience first hand the feeling of speaking out against another's oppression. It also helps them to see their own roles—as males—in the light of traditional male privilege.

Here are some questions you might ask of your child (depending on her/his age) that might also emerge in the classroom: What might *women*'s lives have been like in the particular period being studied? (For example, how might Jewish *women* have reacted to the Enlightenment? What were circumstances like for women's education during the Golden Age of the Jews in Spain?) Even if the history teacher doesn't know the answers when the students bring up questions like these in class, asking is a useful consciousness-raiser in itself.

In classes on Jewish religious practices, ask why traditional liturgy blesses our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and not always our mothers Sarah, Rachel, Rebecca and Leah. Why have females been excluded from the *minyan* [worshippers' quorum], from Torah reading, and from other important aspects of ritual celebration? (This could get the students into an interesting discussion about role definitions for men and women.)

Courtesy of the Brotherhood Synagogue Religious School

Girls might want to see what happens if they wear a *kippah* (head covering) at prayers, or a *tallit* (if the post-Bar Mitzvah boys do in that school)—the girls could both discover what it feels like to wear these garments, if they never have, and see the school's reaction and that of the other students.

Questions that might be asked about —and in—ethics classes could focus occasionally on the new understanding of equality that the women's movement has given us as *Jewish* women. Just as we try to live our lives as Jews by having Jewish values inform every aspect of our lives—business dealings, treating our neighbors well, and so on—ask how we can bring feminist values of equality into a Jewish setting.

For a majority of students, the hours spent in an afternoon Hebrew school or in Sunday school constitute their only Jewish learning experience. Therefore, what happens there is crucial to the formation of their attitudes—and, for girls, their self-image, too. Moreover, many families rely on the Jewish school to carry the burden of (or the responsibility for) establishing the child's Jewish identity. Since there is often little countervailing Jewish reality at home, Jewish schools must be especially careful not to exclude any child, regardless of gender, from any aspect of Jewish life.

We don't want to raise a generation of Jews who see that in the outside world men and women are advancing—albeit slowly—toward more nearly equal opportunities while the Judaism they're exposed to in Hebrew school shows a community making little or no commitment to gender justice.

The consequence may be that young Jewish women will see opportunities for themselves in the secular world, but few in Jewish life (with the exception of the role models provided by women rabbis in the Reform and Reconstructionist movements). Having learned well the lesson that Judaism is a men's club, they may vote with their feet, and choose not to identify with Judaism as adults.

This is not to suggest that the community as a whole hasn't made some progress toward equalizing female and male roles, especially in the last decade, but that what goes on in the classroom has often failed to transmit any sense of that changing reality to students. It's the rare school that exposes its students to the new books, rituals, non-sexist liturgies and historical studies of Jewish women that Jewish feminist activists have created.

With premature optimism, some of us thought that the gains made by women in the Jewish religious and communal spheres in the 1970's would travel by osmosis into all areas of Jewish life. We hoped that the real changes women worked to bring about—the entry of women into the Reform rabbinate, the equalizing of *aliyah* and *minyan* in Conservative synagogues, the advance of Orthodox women into certain non-traditional communal roles—would automatically slow and arrest the sexism that had crept into so many areas of our lives as Jews.

We were wrong.

It turns out that we are going to have to continue the struggle for equality into the next generation, and monitor very closely the ways in which our sons and daughters are being taught to be Jews. Unless we are vigilant, and willing to use the tools the feminist movement has given us for making change, our daughters may have to fight the same battles again. Our challenge as parents and concerned educators is to build on what we already know about how positive change can be made, eliminating sexism from Jewish education and creating instead a Jewish model for teaching gender justice.

Tsena-Rena

YIVO

"Go and see" or "seek enlightenment" is the title of the Yiddish-language Torah for women, with the portion of the week and folk tales. Tsena-Rena was the first resource that enabled women to educate themselves.

Publications

AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS—A new Jewish women's monthly publication, known as *Kolenoe* (Our Voice), that addresses the concerns of readers as both women and Jews, has been launched here.

The first Jewish women's periodical to be published in the Netherlands since the end of World War II, *Kolenoe* is put out by members of the three-year-old Jewish women's association, "Deborah," but is independent of it. As its opening project, *Kolenoe* has inaugurated a prize-winning competition for a Jewish children's book set in present-day Holland. Copies may be obtained from:

Kolenoe
Maardblad Voor de Bewust Joodse Vrow
Postbus 70371
(Postgiro 187744 Van de Rabobank Te)
10007 KJ Amsterdam

Taking the Fruit: Modern Women's Tales of the Bible is a collection of contemporary *midrashim*—homiletic and legendary embellishments of the Biblical narrative—that reflect women's experiences and love of Torah. The book includes a brief historical introduction and guidelines for creating your own *midrashim*.

Taking the Fruit can be purchased for $5.95 plus 63¢ postage (California residents add 36¢ sales tax) from:

Women's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education
4079 54th Street, Department L
San Diego, CA 92105

Groups and Projects

The Boston Area's Women's Rosh Hodesh (new moon) Group has been meeting since Fall 1981. The group sings, studies Torah and celebrates together. For details contact:

Penina Villenchik Adelman
37 Drew Road
Belmont MA 02178

The Chutzpah Women's Group is struggling in the Chicago area against the proposed Human Life Amendment. If you are doing similar work in other parts of the country or would like to join or support them, contact:

The Chutzpah Women's Group
P.O. Box 60142
Chicago IL 60660
(312) 871-3598

"Kol Nashim," a Jewish feminist group in Houston, has been involved with writing midrashim based on female figures in the Bible. They would like to hear from other women engaged in "midrash-making". Contact them c/o:

Sondra J. Kaplan
1717 Wroxton Ct. #1
Houston TX 77005

"Koach" (strength) is a Toronto-based group engaged in educational, fundraising and advocacy efforts on behalf of battered Jewish women in Israel, Canada and the United States.

The group aims to increase public and professional awareness and understanding of wife assault by:

(1) educating members of the Jewish community about the problem, by means of printed educational materials and a speakers' bureau.
(2) providing financial support for Israeli shelters for battered women.
(3) encouraging the development of Jewish communal resources to serve women who are assaulted.

For further information, contact:

Isabella Meltz
12 Olive Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M6G 1T8

A new Jewish Women's Resource Library, the first of its kind on the West Coast, has been (launched) by the Los Angeles Section of the National Council of Jewish Women. Opened at the Council House on March 14, 1982, the library is designed to "provide each woman with the elements she requires to cultivate and nourish her own choice of how to live a Jewish life." Its collection will include archival material, creative services and life-cycle ceremonies, Jewish reference materials, creative and scholarly works and other works by, for and about Jewish women.

Relevant materials, or requests for further information, should be sent to: **Shoshana Hirsh Yomtov, Staff Consultant,** or **Ilene Olansky, Library Chairperson,** at:

National Council of Jewish Women
Los Angeles Section
543 N. Fairfax Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90036
(213) 651-2930

Conference

"Women Surviving: The Holocaust" is the subject of a conference to be held March 20-21 at Stern College (Lex. Av. & 35 St.) in New York. The conference, the first of its kind, will include workshops and panel discussions by survivors and scholars. The gathering will explore the specific nature of women's experiences in the ghettos, resistance, camps, and in hiding. To register contact:

Dr. Joan M. Ringleheim
The Institute for Research in History
432 Park Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016
(212) 689-1931

— Marilyn Feit

A Short Story by Shelley Anne Richtmyer

JOURNEY

They were finally packed and dressed and on their way. The children traded Lifesavers in the back seat ("I'll give you two oranges for one green") and she treated herself to the twin luxuries of FM radio and cigarette. Uncomfortable with machinery, she had domesticated the car, tamed the beast, through sheer neglect. Beach sand danced in vinyl grooves, the dog's wet nose had traced intricate patterns on the windows. She was grateful for an hour's ride between home and airport where her ex-husband, Ken, was meeting them.

She looked at the children in the rear-view mirror. The boys were fair, like their father. They looked borrowed, as though someone had loaned them to her to ripen within her body. She often felt like an eccentric aunt, or even a babysitter. She and the children were each attractive, but they lacked symmetry. She was brittle, glamourous; exotic with her dark nail polish and strange clothes. The children were solid and athletic, bright-eyed, like kids in Corn Flakes ads. She looked like she should be draped over a sports car. Her own car, an old Volvo, shivered. She was speeding again, and her hands, gripping the steering wheel, were white with tension.

Driving frightened her. Years before, she had been in a car accident. Ken was driving, Mark an infant; they'd had to wait for an hour for the ambulance. She had drifted in and out of consciousness. Each time she awakened, the lonely stretch of road had become more crowded, more noisy. A tourist bus stopped (it was a Sunday in Muir Woods).

In the months of hospitalization that followed, she'd become obsessed with the idea that her son had died in the collision. She turned to the wall when they spoke of him. The doctors finally allowed her husband to bring the child to her. She played happily with Mark, but when he was taken away, she insisted that it had been the wrong baby, that they'd tried to fool her.

She'd seen a psychiatrist. He told her she was projecting fears about herself. He told her she had irrational guilt about the accident. She said little, she dreaded car trips, but she ceased complaining. She no longer trusted fate, or God, or Ken, or whatever had kept her safe. It was liberating, giving up trust, perhaps that was why she drove too fast.

After a while she became aware of a steady silence.

"Well, Mark, this is it. The beginning of the big trip."

"Ummmmm."

"Mommy, can we go on the airplane before it takes off?"

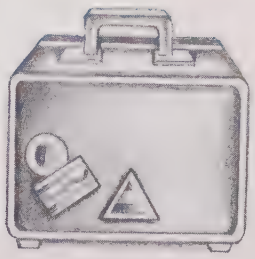
"I hope so, Gabriel. Mark, we'll miss you. Try to send us a postcard."

"I *said* I would."

It was like pulling teeth. He didn't want to talk, was wary of the whole adventure. Mark was going to Israel. She was moved and disturbed by this destination, she was surprised how much it mattered to her. Her parents were taking him; it was a tenth birthday present. She knew that to her parents Israel was just a sunny place, a new land to visit. They never talked about their Jewishness. When she'd married a gentile, they barely noticed; perhaps they were relieved. As a child she'd asked questions, but her parents had been laconic, seemingly bored with the subject. She went to *shul*, without her parents' blessing. Once, knowing her first sentence in Yiddish, she called her grandmother ("Grandma, *vas is dein nomen? Mein nomen is Zorah!*") She liked her new name. But her parents, who named her after a poet, did not. Religion, at ten, was romantic to her. Any religion. She'd wanted to be a nun after seeing Hepburn in "A Nun's Story." Later, she would try to be Holly Golightly. Actually, she'd spent most of her teenage years, gangly and miserable, trying on identities. But this question of being Jewish had remained a small knotted inner confusion. And a fascination. It was as mysterious as sex and as hidden.

Shelley Anne Richtmyer has published poems and articles in The Village Voice *and* Harper's Magazine. *She is presently working on a book about Mary Dyer, a seventeenth-century Quaker, the only woman ever executed in the U.S. for her religious beliefs. This is Richtmyer's first piece of fiction.*

"She'd seen him as a WASP cowboy. He had been mysterious. Now he was vulnerable, middle-aged, in embroidered shirts with a motorcycle."



Now, she was aware, she had the luxury of choice. She didn't look Jewish or have a Jewish name. Then why couldn't she forget it? Why this ambivalence—this resentment and yearning?

Mark's trip had given her an excuse to learn more, to try to understand. She chose to tell her son the story of Masada. She told it like a fairy tale: Once, long ago, a group of 960 Jews—men, women, and children—lived in an abandoned Roman palace. They were at war with the Romans. For nearly ten years they held off thousands of warriors from a high, flat rock, called Masada. When they knew that there was no hope of relief and none of escape, they ended their lives in a mass suicide. They chose death over slavery.

At night she would think of those Jewish families, people caught up in domestic life, unaware that they were heroes, the stuff of legend. She thought of them at dinner ("If we ever get off this damn rock, that'll be the last you see of me. I've had enough nagging and whining to last a lifetime!") She saw the children run from the table, run to distant corners, nooks in the Roman baths, sobbing.

She wanted a space around herself. It was so cluttered, so messy, being Jewish. She felt stifled by centuries of ghetto mentality. Exclusive and defensive. "Oh! I didn't know you were Jewish, too!" An unwelcome welcoming, a secret club, the way blacks talked to each other when no outsiders were near.

Jewish history. All those centuries in hot, hostile countries; islands within islands. At times she felt exhausted, dragging constellations of the past, rattling and whining, wherever she went. It seemed like the entirety of Jewish history was spent arguing around the dinner table; milk and honey and bile.

Tell me, my son, my hybrid, my half-breed, come back and tell me what you've seen.

"Mom?"

"What."

"How much farther?"

"We're half way there. Soon we'll see airplanes landing and taking off."

"Mom?"

"What?"

"Will Daddy be there?"

"Yes. We're meeting him."

She'd told Mark other stories, too. Stories of Moses and Esther, Entebbe and Munich. Mark had listened and was thoughtful but eventually he'd start twitching, anxious to return to television or a ballgame. He squirmed to be free of her seriousness, of her intensity. She realized, finally, that she was pushing too hard; he was, after all, still a child. He couldn't project himself into another, and unimagined, place. His thoughts, like an infant's, rested most comfortably and most pressingly in the present. "What's for dinner?" he'd ask, interrupting her impassioned descriptions.

This afternoon communication had completely broken down. Mark was sullen and silent, his face pressed against the window. Gabriel, who was six, felt left out of the excitement and lonely. Mark felt rejected, as if he was being given away to his grandparents. He'd dressed slowly, playing on her impatience, exerting his power. Finally, there had been a big blow up. After she sent him in to shower she could hear him mumbling about her. Then a crash from the bathroom and he cried to himself "Oh no! Now she's really going to kill me!" He'd broken her bottle of shampoo and stood, wet and shivering, his feet covered with blood.

Somehow, the process of stopping the bleeding, with countless pieces of yellow tissue, had comforted them. She cared for him lovingly and silently. The shattered glass, the bleeding, were understandable and could be managed. They were known terrors, and mother and child were relieved by each other's calm.

The pressure was building again.

"What's the matter with you guys? You're both so quiet."

"Well, you're quiet, too."

"I was thinking, and concentrating on the road. Do you want to play geography or some other game?"

"I'm hungry!"

"We're going to get something to eat with your father."

Their father. She realized she was still annoyed that Ken was meeting them. He had announced that he would be there.

"I'm the one who got the passport, who ironed the shirts, who did all the work to get him ready. You always show up for the dramatic conclusion, for the gravy. Mister generosity once the work is done."

"This is the way you wanted it. You chose not to have me around. Now don't try to tell me that I can't even see my own son off."

"It's just that you haven't earned it! I know that sounds ridiculous...."

"You're damned right. You want the whole number to be yours. You don't want to share them."

"You make me tense. And I'm nervous already about the trip, and your parents have all the money, but it's mine who spend it on the kids, who even want to see them."

"Is that any reason why I should be excluded?"

"I resent your presence there."

"You resent my presence everywhere. Remember? That's why you wanted this divorce."

"Look, it's been three years—and that's not why, anyway. Can't you stop harping on 'this' divorce. It's a fact. Stop making it sound like it was all my fault. Come, all right? I can't take any more self-pity today. Just one thing, let's try to get along and make it nice for the boys. For once, let's not ruin something."

"You're the one who started it."

He was right, about one thing, anyway. She did like it all to herself. Especially in public places. Playing to the grandstand. They were a handsome family; people always noticed them. Gabriel, even missing several teeth, had a sweet expression. Lately he was dealing with profundities, trying to get to the root of things. Last week, at the Burger King, he'd asked, "When God and the presidents made the earth, which one of them made bricks?" Mark, her rationalist, had taken this as his cue to patiently explain evolution, but Gabriel, like a good Fundamentalist, was having none of it.

"We did *not* come from fish and monkeys. God made everything."

"Well, he certainly didn't make bricks, turkey."

"Mommy!"

"Who would like another hamburger?"

Mark, who'd inherited her didactic nature, was slim and fair with long eyelashes and delicate features. He was constantly engaged in muscle building and was dissatisfied with his thin arms

and wiry body. His vulnerability, on the brink of adolescence, touched her deeply. She wanted to encircle him, protect him. He was a private child and gently rejected the offer.

The children seemed to be watching her. She wondered what they thought. Did they resent the fact that she was tall and elegant, often aloof? That she had a private life of work, and men, and books? She knew that many men found her threatening and the men she dated tended to be egotistical, interesting, or rich. She was aware that she made a good accessory; like a Porsche. These men were always surprised that she was a good mother. That she cared so much about her children. Men are traditionalists and they found the atmosphere in the house unnerving. She let the kids sleep in their clothes, as she herself often did, but was strict about things she thought were dangerous: tree climbing, fist fights, T. V. Her children were the kind who liked clams and artichokes (though Gabriel preferred dipping them in chocolate syrup). They are turning out very well, she thought, though there were other times when she'd been in despair. She was starting to feel good, she did not want to share this with Ken. He always made her feel guilty if she was succeeding—as if she was feeding off his misery. When she felt strong she seemed to annoy everyone, as though she was not playing by the rules. Today Ken was the other side of the moon, the goy, the gentile, he didn't know what this trip meant to her.

They were almost at the airport. For the first time, it seemed, she became aware of traffic, road signs, the shimmering light of late afternoon. Her fingers felt locked to the steering wheel; they were cramped and tight. Her neck ached, she rubbed the pain knotted just below the skull.

The airport, in this small state, was a disappointment. It looked like a farm forced to fulfill a modern purpose. The crisscrossed asphalt strips seemed inexplicable. Buildings, resembling temporary military shelters, were of corrugated metal. The airplanes aloof and powerful, looked abandoned and awkward. They seemed shamed, as though they'd been banished to this lonely outpost for some act of insubordination.

Blinking in the sunlight, she and the children were awkward, like a family of grounded birds. The boys dragged the heavy suitcases. The terminal was quiet, nearly empty.

"There's Daddy!"

"Hi, men. Glad you got here early. Let's go have something to eat. Hi. Did you have any trouble getting here?"

"No. I don't really know how we did it. I hardly paid attention. The numbers on the highway kept changing and each time they did I panicked, but it always seemed to be the right road."

"Well, you all look good. The boys look cute dressed up. Let's go eat."

"Are you treating?"

"If you like. It's not important."

"Why don't we just split it."

The restaurant was surprisingly dark and not very clean. There were beautiful pen and ink drawings of antique planes on the walls. The children were lively again; they were excited and tense. Both parents together was unusual, and potentially volatile. Gabriel had no early memories, he was barely two when his parents separated. Mark remembered, he missed his father, but not the fighting. After his father moved out, he felt he'd lost everything. His mother would scream at him and look angry all the time; for a while he felt that his world had shattered, that there was no one to talk to. He would come home from school and find his mother on the telephone, sitting on the kitchen floor, smoking. She seemed annoyed if he was around at all. Now his parents seemed friendly to each other, at least they were talking.

"Ken, I'm going to have a martini. Is it all right? I know you're on the wagon again."

"Yes, I don't mind. You look tired, it will probably help. It doesn't bother me if people are drinking around me."

"I feel a little silly. All of you are having sandwiches and I sit here with a drink and a cocktail napkin. It probably looks like I'm nervous about my flight."

"You should eat something, too. You look thin. Anyway, who cares what they think? It's not like you to care what anyone thinks."

She wasn't sure how he intended that remark. She was defensive around him. He had called her thin, tired. She let it go. The children were having sandwiches and lemonade and jello (*ess, ess, mein kind*). They chattered to their father and she gratefully settled back, an outsider.

Once, they both scolded Gabriel for being silly, overexuberant, really. There was a curious intimacy in their spontaneous mutual reaction, they were both embarrassed by it. Gabriel sulked, he wasn't used to the parental double whammy, he felt they'd ganged up on him.

She didn't like this place. No one lived in airports. Everything was dirty, but nothing really was used. The loudspeaker announcements, garbled and anonymous, reminded her of that time in the hospital. People wandered by, carrying their belongings, like refugees.

Ken was laughing with the kids. She stared at him. That grin reminded her of an old photograph. Ken was a young Navy officer. He is standing in front of a building in the Aleutian Islands. He holds a baby apart from himself, like an offering. The child is three days old. This is the first time it has seen the sky. Ken's grin was the same today, but the child, now on his second dish of jello, had grown up. Ken was easy and charming with the boys. He was a nice man. When had she loved him? Why had she stopped?

When they'd married, she thought his lack of emotion was rock-like, a comforting stoicism after the tricky shoals of her own family. Ken seemed to know the truth about things. She wanted him to tell her that she would be safe. She thought that if he did, she would be. But his stoicism ended up being only repression, he suffered from nightmares, he drank hard. His political conservatism, which created an erotic friction between them, eroded. He was really like her parents, her friends, herself. She'd seen him as a WASP cowboy, the Marlboro man. He had been mysterious. Now he was knowable, vulnerable. He looked silly, a middle-aged man in embroidered shirts with a motorcycle. She knew he was "nicer" now, but she did not love him anymore. There were other things, of course, the official things—her feminism, his drinking, the thousand petty ways they drove each other crazy.

"It's time to put Mark on the plane. Hello, are you there?"

"Yes. Let's go. Mark, here's a dime. Throw it in the wishing pool for good luck."

"Oh! Can't I keep it?"

"No. It's a good luck dime. Throw it in."

There were awkward goodbyes. The boys were uncomfortable hugging each other; Mark was at an age where he was embarrassed by physical affection. She put him on the plane in a window seat next to two businessmen. This flight, a one-hour trip to her parents' house, was a short preamble to the trip to Israel. She hugged him, and when she left, he, the seasoned little traveler, in sport coat and sneakers, was reading a magazine.

Ken walked his ex-wife and Gabriel (his ex-child?) to the car. He stood outside, leaning on the door.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Home."

She felt him wince at the word.

He lingered, still leaning on the car. Anchoring her.

"Goodbye, sport. Take care of Mommy. I'll see you this weekend."

"Bye. Daddy."

Driving home, a little drunk, she started to cry. Everything was going backwards. Like the bottles of beer on the wall, or the ten little Indians, her family had diminished by one, again.

Illustrated by Jean Tuttle

Reviews

Looking at Ourselves at the Jewish Film Festival

The week-long offerings of documentaries and feature films at the New York Jewish Film Festival (Fall 1981) were like some extraordinary family album—richly affecting, full of familiarity, and yet also full of revelations, especially so for Jewish women. The films are scheduled in other major cities later this year. A striking number of the most distinctive films were directed by women,and are about women. Even in the films made by male directors, the images of women are what linger most powerfully, even hauntingly.

The personal documentaries ranged from portraits of young women struggling for autonomy and self-definition, like Ilana Bardin's *Leaving Home* (reviewed in issue #8) and *Joyce at 34* made by Joyce Chopra and Claudia Weill, to a touching neo-anthropological study of old Jews, *Number Our Days*, directed by Lynne Littman from Barbara Meyerhoff's book.

The two best-known feature films on the program, Weill's *Girlfriends* and Lee Grant's *Tell Me a Riddle*, similarly involve Jewish women directors (and writers) looking at Jewish women across the generations. Weill's young heroine struggles to shape her professional life as a photographer, and Grant gives us Tillie Olsen's poignant story of an old woman struggling to come to terms with the thwarted life she's led during hectic years of mothering that robbed her of her own freedom and intellectual development.

These two American women directors give a welcome shaking-up to some over-familiar stereotypes of Jewish women. Tillie Olsen shows us, through Lee Grant at how much cost to herself the famous all-nurturing Jewish Mama gave. Weill's equally fresh vision is of a young Jewish woman's coming of age, her face very much turned toward work and her back turned to weddings and children.

Girlfriends, by far the better film of the two, which talked with a surprising new voice to some important feminist themes when it first came out a few years ago, still feels fresh, charming, disarmingly personal. This is due in large part to the attractive New York Jewish quality of its central figure, a quality that at the same time is very different from standard film images of young Jewish women.

Filmways Pictures, Inc.

Lila Kedrova and Melvyn Douglas in the film, "Tell Me A Riddle."

In Melanie Mayron, who plays Susan Weinblatt, Weill also cast an interesting and real person. The look and personality of Mayron is central to the film—her wild hair and unfashionable glasses, her too-round face and irregular teeth, her attractively clumsy gait—and the fact that she is beautiful and enormously appealing, looking as unconventional as this. Along with her intelligence, she has a lovely whimsy and hunger for life, and intense work ambition.

Mayron is not a great actress, nor is this a monumental character, but Weill's heroine is full of a precious individuality unusual in film, and rooted here in the particularity of her New York Jewish origins.

The film is about work, an area American films have never done well with (in contrast with Italian films, for instance) but which is crucial to feminism. Weill doesn't glamorize work; she honestly pictures what it is to work hard, to learn to push for oneself, to cope with competitiveness. She shows us the disappointments, and the joy of achievement and recognition.

The film has Susan raise questions about marriage and childbearing through her disapproval of her more conventional friend Anne's decision to marry, have children, and forego her writing. Susan, scornful of the old "gracious living" marriage ideal, is like one of her photos, glimpsed fleetingly, of a girl turning away from the bride. Yet the film harbors no cliches. If all the marriages in the movie are floundering, living alone is not idealized but seen as painfully lonely.

Only an independent filmmaker, and a brave one, would attempt such unlikely (that is, unmarketable) material as Tillie Olsen's "Tell Me A Riddle." An old couple is at the center of the film, quarreling bitterly; the woman, further, dying of cancer; beyond that, she is an old Jewish mother and grandmother who recoils from her young.

A character this appealing and yet this contrary to stereotypes is in itself a contribution. Olsen's theme of the woman imprisoned in domesticity, craving books and solitude to think her own thoughts, is powerful enough to even manage to give some strength to the film, but so wonderful, and so richly and uniquely Jewish a literary work deserves far better than it got at the hands, however well meaning, of Lee Grant.

Being a Jewish woman director going the independent route is in no way a guarantee of quality, even with such a brilliant and touching work. The world created there, saturated in Yiddish culture, radiant with poetry, heavy with the deepest emotions, needed an equal talent to translate it to the screen—and Lee Grant's direction in my view is disastrous, as is her

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choice of Lila Kedrova for the heroine. Despite some captivating childlike charm and glee at moments, Kedrova's face is wrong, her movements are wrong, as inauthentic as the Beverly Hills costumed group that in flashbacks are laughably supposed to evoke old Revolutionary Russia. These choices, as well as other kinds of directorial decisions, are continually disturbing. Only Melvyn Douglas, the old husband in *Riddle*, can sometimes sound true notes. Still, people sniffled all through the movie at the Jewish Film Festival, stirred by the film's general content and what they recognized in it.

The American women directors focus heavily on the personal and on self-exploration, and strongly question traditional associations with love, marriage, and motherhood. The films by non-American men—*The Wooden Drum* by the Israeli director Ilan Moshenson, and *High Street* by the Belgian director Andre Ernotte—are heavy with tragedy—of war and Holocaust. Although not conventional films, they cast women in traditional symbolic roles, identified them with family, and with profound emotion, to the point of hysteria, even derangement. The terrible Holocaust losses are expressed through their anguished grief for their own particular destroyed family. By the intensity of their suffering the women provide a humanizing moral vision from the pain of the Holocaust.

Annie Cordy, a well known comedic performer in Europe, does an extraordinary tour de force as a seemingly mad woman in *High Street*. She *is* the film in fact, as she stares out blankly from behind her street fish stall or alternately, rages in the streets. Gradually we realize that she is reliving over and over again the S.S.' taking of her husband and their killing her child, while people watched and did nothing to help. She repeats that indictment from a church pulpit and, in fact, everywhere—a harrowing truth she will never be released from, witness to a level of monstrosity that pushes one beyond sanity. But her madness is entered voluntarily by a successful American painter in the film who becomes fascinated with her, and finally takes her place. While this artist is not a convincing character (a serious flaw), the woman herself—and the mute German man who accompanies her—are haunting figures, and her paroxysms are seen not only as a pitiful illness but as an appropriate moral response to this world.

In *The Wooden Gun*, a 1979 Israeli film that addresses itself to the question of Israel's military preoccupations through a "war" between two groups of pre-adolescent boys, the two important female characters are again vessels of intense emotion, of mourning and memory of the dead. And finally they are figures who point the way beyond these, to healing and peace. The boy who is the central character of the film, Yoni, is deeply attached to a mother obsessed with finding her lost (and probably dead) Eastern European family (the film is set in 1950, right after the War of Independence). Yoni's mother is horror-struck at the thought of further wars for Israel and equally chagrined over the parallel warring of her son and his friends. Palestina, the other central woman character in this affecting film, is a mad woman who dances by the sea, and cries to her neighbors for peace. Victimized by the boys, she lives in a kind of cave, the walls of which are covered with photographs of Holocaust dead, as well as one wall ablaze with yahrzeit-like candles. The film's most powerful and poignant scene occurs here, when Yoni finally reaches a stunned understanding of what the Holocaust was. The film's conclusion shows him groping his way toward some alternative to the hopeless male militarism he has been living by, and the film's women are crucial to this process.

—Barbara Koenig Quart

Studying the Public and Private Selves of American Jewish Women

With the resurgence of the women's movement in the past decade has come a renewal of interest in women's history. The search for a usable past has accompanied efforts to shape a new present for women in the United States. Women have demanded from historians an explanation of their neglect of women as subjects of study, and in the process have challenged prevailing models of the nature of historical inquiry. A new group of scholars now work in the field of women's history and in such related areas as family and social history.

American Jewish women have recognized the crucial importance of a usable past to their quest for an equal future. Yet their efforts to rediscover their history have been hampered in ways that reflect the situation of Jews and Jewish scholarship in America.

American Jewish women as subjects of study suffer from the disability that their defining characteristics—American, Jewish, female—war with each other.

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The Jewish Woman in America by Charlotte Baum, Paula Hyman, Sonya Michel. New York: The Dial Press, 1976, $8.95

The Jewish Woman in America: Two Female Immigrant Generations 1820-1929 by Rudolf Glanz. New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc. 1976, $25.

The American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History by Jacob Rader Marcus. New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc. 1981, $35.

The American Jewish Woman, 1654-1980 by Jacob Rader Marcus. New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc. 1981, $15.

Consecrate Every Day: Public Lives of Jewish American Women, (1880-1980), by June Sochen. New York: SUNY Press, 1981, $9.50.

Historians of American women ignore Jews just as scholars of American Jews overlook women. The irony is compounded by the fact that many of the women's-history scholars are Jewish by birth while the specialists in American Jewry include a significant minority of women. Why have American Jewish women who study the Jewish American past resolutely refused to hold a mirror for themselves, to seek out the interrelatedness of their own history, social structure, and ideology. Why are American Jewish women so little studied at all? The recent article by Arthur Goren on American Jews in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* fails even to mention women. An analysis of what has been written on the history of American Jewish women suggests some reasons why the scholarly community skirts the ideological hazards of this most value-related topic.

Prior to the 1970's a handful of historians approached the subject of American Jewish women in a search for heroines. When their point of view toward women was rooted in historic Jewish values, they discovered heroines who usually excelled in traditional female roles, involving primarily the care and nurture of children, and secondarily the doing of deeds of charity.

An early volume on Jewish women by Anita Libman Lebeson, a pietistic historian of American Jews, embodies these characteristics. While the roster of appropriate Jewish heroines in American life was short, *Recall to Life: The Jewish Women in America* (Yoseloff, 1970), did bring attention to such exceptional women as Rebecca Gratz, the 19th century

"Jewish women appeared in history as perverters of marital purity or victims of male oppression."

organizer of Jewish Sunday Schools; Lillian Wald, the 20th century founder of the Henry Street Settlement and its visiting nurse program; and Henrietta Szold, the woman who started Hadassah and ran Youth Aliyah.

Ironically, marriage and its corollary, child rearing, were often exalted as the modal experiences for Jewish women through heroines who neither married nor bore children. By contrast, if the historian searching for American Jewish heroines emphasized the American context of Jewish history, she produced a list that usually spotlighted those figures who had achieved renown in "masculine" terms. The poet Emma Lazarus of Statue of Liberty fame, the Owenite Socialist Ernestine Rose, the radical anarchist Emma Goldman, and the union organizer Rose Schneiderman were featured in this competing cast of heroines. If the accomplishments of these women were clearly extraordinary, their position as Jews was questionable. With the exception of Lazarus, whose passionate concern for East European Jewish immigrant pogrom victims placed her on both lists, these women renounced their ties to traditional Judaism and refused to acknowledge any primary loyalty to the Jewish people. The contrast between particularist and universalist Jewish heroines could not be more vivid.

With the rise to prominence of social history, perspectives on American Jewish women shifted dramatically. Social historians uncovered the lives not of exceptional people but of ordinary folk, and in the process they discovered the anti-heroine among American Jewish women: the prostitute. If Jewish women initially had been portrayed as the upholders of virtue and morality, the mainstay of the home and tradition, or as the righteous champions of prophetic justice in America, they now appeared in history as the perverters of marital purity or as the victims of male oppression. Yet the reclamation from history's dustbin of the Jewish prostitute, and her associates—the unwed mother, the abandoned wife, and the exploited factory girl—by those scholars working within the framework of American social history did not stimulate sensitivity to the Jewish aspects of these women's lives. Ruth Rosen's introduction to the letters of that remarkable Jewish ex-prostitute, Maimie Pinzer, *The Maimie Papers* (Feminist Press, 1977), rarely takes cognizance of Maimie's Jewishness, of her responses to efforts to convert her to Christianity, or of the Jewish resonances of her conflict with her mother.

There is more attention paid to Jewish identity factors in Alice Kessler-Harris's influential article, "Organizing the Unorganizable: Three Jewish Women and their Union,"* on Pauline Newman, Fannia Cohn, and Rose Pesotta, organizers in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Like Rosen, Harris explores the complexity of women's responses to economic exploitation, the intersection of patriarchy and class conflict, and the difficulties these Jewish women encountered in their search for identity. But while Harris focuses on the dilemmas the three faced by choosing a career with the union instead of the conventional option of marriage and family, she also notes that American Jewish culture's "injunction to self-suffiency encouraged a militant sense of independence" in American Jewish women. Harris attempts to balance the class-conscious environment of the Lower East Side and its ethic of social justice with its competitive individualism and desire to get ahead. She credits these contradictory values to a multi-faceted American Jewish culture, enabling us to understand American Jewish women better. Yet the secularist orientation of this insightful analysis still falls short including the particularly Jewish within its universalist perspective.

Typically, when historians who work within the context of Jewish history confront lower class American Jewish women, they deal with them through the reformers who tried to improve their plight. This approach especially characterizes Rudolf Glanz's two volume history of *The Jewish Woman in America* (KTAV, 1976, 1977).

However, Charlotte Baum, Paula Hyman, and Sonya Michel, in their book of the same title *The Jewish Woman in America* (Dial, 1976), also employ an institutional lens to refract an analysis of poor working women's lives. They examine the situation of Jewish prostitutes largely through the efforts of the National Council of Jewish Women to alleviate their plight. This perspective illuminates the relationship between upper-middle-class Jewish women and their poorer sisters, revealing that the former had no more special ability to transcend class and ethnic barriers than their American Gentile peers. The authors also demonstrate that Judaism, whether understood as religion, social justice ethics, sense of peoplehood, or culture, did not substantially alter the relationship between the two classes of women. In fact, the most potent insight of this thoughtful and stimulating book is a feminist one that lays bare the male bias of Jewish philanthropic social service organizations and their histories. The institutional approach to Jewish women places the concept of Jewish community in the forefront, insuring that inherently Jewish issues will be explored. But Baum, Hyman, and Michel's valuable contribution to American Jewish communal studies also mutes the impact of a focus on ordinary individuals by its emphasis on middle- and upper-class organizations.

Most recently, the resurgence of feminist scholarship has suggested new categories of analysis that derive from an appreciation of woman's social and psychological situation. Feminist historians have stressed the importance of developing modes of thought which recognize the inherently male bias of much previous study of women. The search for women in parallel fields of endeavor as men—in politics, economics, the arts, and social service—constricts the possibilities of seeing women on their own terms. Feminist scholars have spurred study of the nature of women's bonds with other women, women's attitudes to their sexuality, the relationship of mothers and daughters, as well as the character of women's work and education. These issues imply a shift away from the public aspect of women's lives to the private sphere. Here scholars can uncover women's sensibilities, and by fusing these with the insights of social history, perhaps reclaim a usable past.

But Jewish feminist historians seeking to follow the same path are stymied by the revolutionary character of the enterprise. How can one link a feminist perspective on American Jewish women with the concerns of Judaism or Jewish history? The first work to try this feat—*The Jewish Woman in America* by Baum *et al*—had a special problem in its efforts to rescue the world of our mothers and rehabilitate the

*reprinted in Cantor & Laurie, eds. *Class, Sex and the Woman Worker* (Greenwood, 1977)

model of an aggressive, self-confident American Jewish woman. When compared to the immigrant pioneers, contemporary American Jewish women appeared weak. Yet perhaps the most moving section of the book, the description of an immigrant woman's weekly night at the steam baths, is a hidden tribute by one of the authors to her mother, an ordinary yet vital Jewish woman who transmitted to her daughter a healthy dose of self-assurance.

As the jointly authored volume's reception among Jewish historians indicated, the task of developing a feminist perspective on American Jewish women is enormous, and the environment is far from receptive. Vaunted for its liberalism by students of American Jewish women who can find a bevy of radical heroines or cohorts of militant women garment workers to study, the Jewish community refuses to recognize women outside their proper place. Communal histories can glorify striking shirtwaist makers but cannot cope with women who strike over the cost of kosher meat. The former fit neatly into the universalist perspective, where their Jewishness appears marginal or at most inspirational to their protest for higher wages, better working conditions, and a chance to live with dignity and self-respect. But women who protest against parts of the Jewish community shatter that perspective, as Paula Hyman has shown in her superb article, "Neighborhood Women and Consumer Protest: The New York City Kosher Meat Boycott of 1902."* After all, these Jewish wives are on strike not over exploitative sweatshop labor but over the price of kosher meat.

The immigrant women who were traditional enough to buy kosher meat also knew why they could interrupt the Sabbath worship services to voice their protest over the injustice being done. Jewish tradition provided not merely the social context for their protest but the mode and motive as well. Yet the strikers were modern women, too; they understood how the capitalist economy worked and employed the rhetoric of the socialist class struggle. The American, Jewish, and female aspects of their lives cohered. We need to make room for an appreciation of their synthesis, but to do this we must overcome the ironies American Jewish women face.

The recent history of American Jewish women, *Consecrate Every Day* (SUNY, 1981) by June Sochen, illustrates one dilemma with particular vividness—the inability to transcend the universalist/particularist divide. Sochen combines both portrait galleries of Jewish heroines but places each in separate chapters. She similarly copes with the conflicting perspectives of American and Jewish social history; working women receive equal but separate treatment from women's communal organizations. Only in her penultimate chapter, appropriately titled "Successful Mergers," does she recognize the synthesis and tentatively explore how exceptional women created it.

Jacob Rader Marcus similarly stumbles in his efforts to describe how some women combine the universalist and Jewish aspects of their lives in his new book, *The American Jewish Woman 1654-1980*. Yet the synthesis begs to be analyzed, understood, and built upon. Furthermore, the tools for future research are available.

Alice Kessler-Harris speculates that "feelings of displacement and the need for mutual support may have prompted the drive by women members of the ILG's Local 25 to create first an educational department and then a vacation retreat." Here we have a glimpse into that union of private spheres with public actions, embodying, by implication at least, a coherent synthesis developed by American Jewish women. Clearly, the women workers entertained different ideas from their male counterparts about the purposes and structure of a trade union. Their values and attitudes toward their own lives as working women, as Americans with a sense of their rights and dignity, and as Jews with a concept of community all combined into an image of a trade union whose faint outlines we can see.

A recent study, "Jewish Involvement in the New York City Woman Suffrage Movement,"* by Elinor Lerner provides another example of a perspective on American Jewish women integrating the facets of their identity into a whole. Lerner shows how attitudes toward women's rights (seen as a general civil-rights issue) depended in part on the experience of men and women working together in factory and marketplace. Immigrant Jewish women shared an environment with men which embraced home and factory, bedroom and street. The overlapping of friendships, activities, and issues in this context narrowed the distance between men and women, allowing the latter to construct flexible identities, even producing a synthesis of Jewish, American, radical, and feminist values. Specifically, Jewish immigrants saw a vote for women's suffrage as a vote for civil rights, another step in the dismantling of the wall of prejudice Jews faced, and an affirmation of America's fundamental creed of equality.

If we want to understand how American Jewish women have reached their current condition, we need to know also how the second generation coped with the intersecting problems of work, residence, family, and community.

American Jewish women must reclaim their heritage, for its richness will enhance the study of American women as its breadth will broaden the scope of Jewish scholarship. Within the study of American Jewish women lie the sources for a perspective on women which will help to etch more sharply their identity and social position. As the sociologist Cynthia Fuchs Epstein recalled regarding her own Jewish childhood, in history lies the possibility for imagining the future.

> "I never imagined that by my own mind or hands I could achieve the exalted position to which I aspired. This was in spite of the fact that my father liberally bestowed on me books containing the biographies of great women, particularly great Jewish women. Deborah in the Bible, the poet Emma Lazarus ... and the socialist Rosa Luxemburg. I suppose they had impact, however, because they exposed me to the idea that women could be doers ...*"

A perspective placing American Jewish women not merely within the family, as manipulative mothers and precocious princesses, but within interrelated social structures, would free the study of American Jewish women from the universalist/particularist dilemma. It would help to explain how American Jewish women today can be typed as Hadassah ladies and NOW organizers, as princesses engaged in conspicuous consumption and as professionals pursuing full-time careers. This perspective would challenge those who are so comfortable in their universalism that they cannot recognize a Jew, as well as those Jews so parochial in their outlook that they refuse to perceive women. It would lead us to a pluralism of perspectives and plurality of models of American Jewish women. While some of the differentiating criteria are obvious—such as class—others are more subtle and involve an appreciation of the variety of Jewish communal structures available to women. These social structures translate Jewishness into a liveable, mutable, reality. What we need to explore is how women use them to achieve a synthesis of public and private selves.

—Deborah Dash Moore

*in a special issue of *American Jewish History*, v. 70, n.1 (Sept. 1980) devoted to the American Jewish woman.

*in *American Jewish History*, v. 70, n.4 (June 1981).

*"Mind, Matter, and Mentors: The Making of a Sociologist," in *The Frontiers of Knowledge*, ed. Judith Stiehm (USC Press, 1976) quoted in Sochen, p. 137.

Kol Ishah

(Continued from p. 5)

Symphony in Honor of Golda Meir

WASHINGTON—"Brachot Para Golda Meir," a symphony in honor of the late Israeli Premier by Colombia's leading contemporary composer, had its world premiere performance at the 13th Inter-American Music Festival, held at the Kennedy Center May 15.

The composer, Blas Emilio Atehortua, who is of Sephardic Jewish descent, said the inspiration for his work was the universal admiration of Mrs. Meir. (JTA)

Mazel Tov

NEW YORK—The 12 women ordained in May and June as Reform rabbis and the two named as Reconstructionist rabbis in June will bring to 61 the total number of women ordained as Reform Reconstructionist rabbis since 1972, according to an annual Jewish Telegraphic Agency survey.

The eight women named Reform rabbis in New York City are: Donna Berman of Valley Stream NY; Miriam Biatch of Studio City CA; Devorah Jacobson of Surfside FL; Patricia Karlin of Plantation FL; Deborah Zecher of Monroeville PA; Amy Perlin of Washington DC; Ruth Sohn of Teaneck NJ; and Julie Wolkoff of St. Louis Park MN.

The four women named Reform rabbis in Cincinnati are: Lenore Bohm of Atlanta GA; Deborah Hirsch of Chicago IL; Dena Feingold of Janesville WI; and Sally Finestone of Clifton Forge VA.

The two women ordained as Reconstructionist rabbis in Philadelphia are Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer of Stanford CA; and Susan Schnur of Trenton NJ.

Of the 61 women rabbis, 49 are Reform and 12 Reconstructionist.

Susan Grossman, writer and graduate student in Judaic studies at Brooklyn College, was elected President of the North American Jewish Students Appeal in January 1982. The Appeal is the umbrella funding agency for five Jewish student organizations.

Suzanne Parelman, Vice-President of the Jewish Federation of Kansas City, was appointed Chairperson of the North American Jewish Students Appeal in March 1981.

Ida Eisenseld and **Charlotte Rothstein,** elected mayors of Mt. Clemens and Oak Park respectively, both suburban Detroit communities, last November 1981.

Kathryn Lasky received a 1982 National Jewish Book Award in Children's Literature for *The Night Journey,* published by Frederick Warne Co., Inc.

Sheila Zucker, producer and host of the "Sheila Zucker Show," airing locally on WEVD-FM, was one of three recipients of the Eleanor Roosevelt Humanities Award presented annually by the Career and Professional Women's Division of the State of Israel Bonds.

Obituaries

Dr. Helene Deutsch (March 29, 1982), 97. Psychoanalyst and author Dr.Deutsch is best known for her two-volume work, *The Psychology of Women,* published in 1944 (the first volume deals with girlhood, the second with motherhood). She was also the first female analyst to be analyzed by Sigmund Freud, and was a staunch supporter of his theories. Though popular when it first appeared, *The Psychology of Women* has come under strong criticism from feminists for its stress on women's innate passivity.

Renee Goldstuck (February 16, 1982), age 63. Goldstuck was the Jewish Telegraphic Agency's correspondent in Brussels for 30 years, during which time she also served as the private secretary to Israel's Ambassador to Belgium.

Ida Lewis Siegel (March 1982), age 97. Zionist, educator and community leader, Siegel was among the most prominent members of the Toronto Jewish community. She proposed the creation of an organization that would coordinate fund-raising in the Jewish community; helped establish Canadian Hadassah; was among the founders of the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Associations and Toronto's first home and school association; and was active in the Canadian Jewish Congress. She was also the first Jewish member of Toronto's Board of Education.

Joan R. Singer (April 25, 1982), age 53. Singer was *Lilith's* correspondent in Hartford, and was a free-lance writer whose articles (generally dealing with women's issues) appeared in the *Hartford Courant, The New York Times, The Boston Globe,* the *Hartford Advocate,* the *Women's American ORT Reporter* and the *Connecticut Jewish Ledger.* She was also producer and moderator of the weekly program, "What About Women" on Channel 30, taught courses in writing and women's issues at the University of Hartford and was active in Temple Beth Israel in West Hartford, B'nai B'rith Women and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

Baroness Alix de Rothschild (May 1982), age 67. A patron of Israeli and Jewish art and music, she helped create the Bathsheva Dance Company and headed several French and international committees devoted to the support of art and music.

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Bima by Jane Litman

Jewish women have long been denied a place on the *Bima* from which they could state their views publicly and exercise leadership in the community. This column provides a platform for women to speak out on controversial issues affecting the contemporary Jewish community.

Is Judaism a Matriarchal Religion?

Recently on vacation, I happened to have dinner with a couple I met while traveling. The man began discussing Judaism. As the conversation progressed, he became gradually more openly anti-Semitic. Finally he proclaimed, "The reason Jews are not accepted in this society is that their matriarchal culture is offensive to most middle-class Christian men. Last night we had dinner with some other Jews and we couldn't believe the way that woman talked to her husband." I found myself both shocked and delighted that this "middle-class Christian man" had come so easily to a position it had taken me years of research and work to reach, namely that Judaism is, in its essence, a matriarchal religion/culture.

As a feminist woman I had spent most of the last ten years deeply ambivalent about Judaism. I could not understand why I found myself so attracted to an obviously male-oriented culture. I would have great crises of faith in which I would alternately renounce and return to Judaism. Three years ago I decided to define which elements of Jewish life held the most attraction for me; then I began to examine the roots of those elements. Judaism became, for me, an exciting surprise present wrapped in layers of brown paper. As I stripped each layer of patriarchy away, I discovered a woman-identified life system, a religion that resonated with needs and desires buried deep within my soul.

I am primarily attached to Judaism through its elevation of family and community, and the holidays. I have never been drawn to the endless detail of Jewish law. I am a member of a Jewish woman's ritual group in Berkeley, California. This group and others like it around the country are making an effort to rewrite and rework "traditional" liturgy and ritual. Being the leading Jewish "scholar" in my group, the duty frequently fell upon me to explain the history and variations of certain practices.

I was consistently surprised at the antiquity of Jewish ritual. Slowly I found myself transported to another time—an age of tribal desert culture in which our mothers were the spiritual leaders, a time when Judaism was matrilineal (passed down through women as it still is to this day) and matrilocal (men joining their mothers' or wives' tribes), when, as a people, we were connected to the rythms of the stars and the cycles of the earth.

The Jewish calendar is lunar, its monthly measures attuned to those of our bodies. Rosh Chodesh, the new month/new moon, is a special women's holiday. Most Jewish holidays are set for the full or new moon and celebrate yearly natural events. Historical stories were later attached to the pre-existing agricultural/pastoral festivals. Thus the Exodus was linked to the full moon immediately following the Vernal Equinox, and the Maccabean revolt was attached to the waning-new moon following the Winter Solstice.

Patriarchal militaristic legends replaced this early Jewish attunement to the Earth. The Chanukah lighting of candles symbolizes the yearly turning of night to day, of dark moon to new moon, not some mythical divine miracle following a victorious holy war. The shankbone, matzah, and egg of the Passover Seder plate celebrate the birthing of lambs, the first barley harvest and the laying of eggs, not the killing of innocent children. Some of those stories may well be true and are part of our people's past, but another past exists before them.

Rosh Hashana was originally not the new year. It is the first day of the seventh month, the month of harvest. Rosh Hashana falls on the new moon of the Autumnal Equinox. The shofar was used to call together the far-flung nomads to a central camp at which they underwent a ritual purification (Yom Kippur), and harvested the fall crops (Sukkot). Sukkot begins on the full moon following the equinox.

The Jewish month's lunar cycle averages 29 days, divided into four quarters (each week) and one day (Rosh Chodesh). I believe that at one time the weeks were in synchrony with the lunar cycles so that week one began at the new moon, week two at the waxing quarter moon, week three at the full moon, and week four at the waning quarter moon. Thus the holidays of Passover, Sukkot, and Chanukah, the spring, fall, and winter festivals each began on Shabbat, continued for the six intermediate days, and ended at the close of the following Shabbat. That is why the first and last days of each of these holidays are still considered especially holy.

When did it change? I believe that sometime after the Exodus from Egypt all the tribes gathered together and made the leap into patriarchal monotheism. Thus all the separate gods (Adonai, Elohim, El Shaddai, El Elyon among others) were seen as aspects of the One God. Sadly, the Goddesses (Ishtar, Astarte, Lilith, Isis etc.) were not included. The hereditary male priesthood gained power and matriarchal Judaism went underground, practiced by the women and the common men but not by the writers of Torah.

How poignant is the description of Miriam's protest of the new way. "Why does God only speak through Moses?" she asks, "Am I not also a prophet?" So in underground ways we as Jewish women remember that we are prophets. We have never stopped asking Miriam's question. We have been queens and leaders, revolutionaries, poets, reformers. Though we may not even be aware of it, another time has illuminated our collective subconscious and made us strong.

Jane Litman is a feminist writer and Judaic scholar. She teaches Jewish women's studies at San Francisco Bay area women's centers and synagogues. Her particular interest is female-identified spirituality and ritual. She is a founding member of the Bay Area Jewish Women's Collective.

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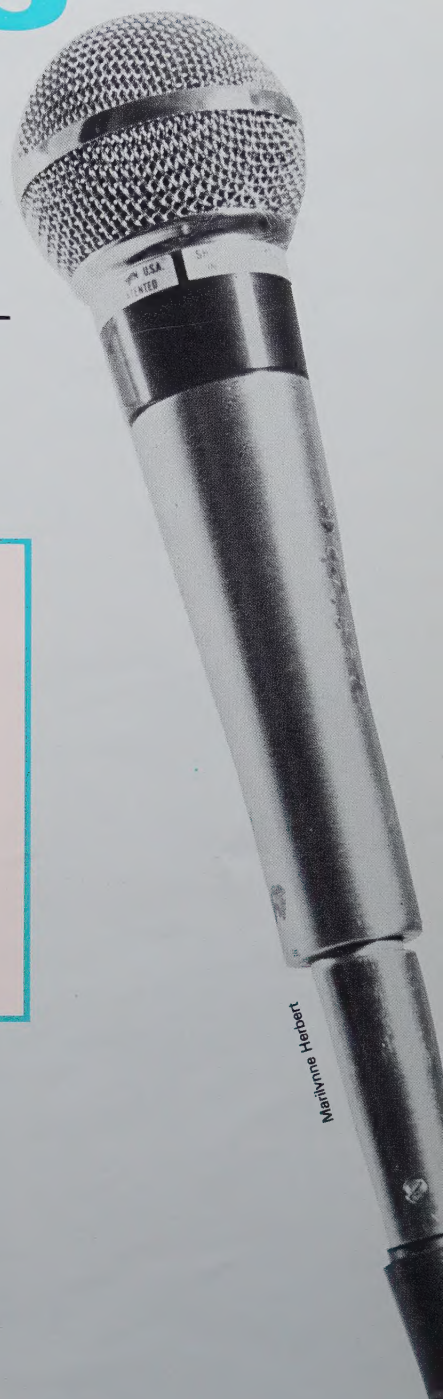

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